Middlemarch

A Study of Provincial Life

GEORGE ELIOT

CHAPTER ONE

Miss Brooke

Miss Dorothea Brooke had the kind of beauty that looks even better in plain clothes. Her hands and wrists, in their plain sleeves, were like those of the Madonna in Italian paintings. Dorothea and her younger sister Celia lived with their uncle at Tipton Grange, a fine house near the town of Middlemarch. The Brookes were an old and respectable family. Both sisters dressed plainly because they considered ornamentation vulgar, but Dorothea's style of dress was also the result of religious feeling. She liked to read theological books and ask herself great questions about the purpose of life on earth.

Such a woman does not spend time thinking about the latest fashions.

The sisters had only recently moved into the area, so their neighbours were very interested in them. They thought that Dorothea was intelligent but Celia had more common sense. Dorothea read too many books and did strange things. Once she knelt down by a sick labourer in the street and prayed for him. The neighbours thought that men might hesitate to ask for Dorothea's hand in marriage, even though she was beautiful and charming and had seven hundred pounds a year of her own. They thought that she might spend all her husband's money on Christian charity or argue with him about politics or religion. No, the neighbours did not approve of Miss Dorothea Brooke. They preferred Celia, who looked so innocent and friendly. Poor Dorothea! She was much more innocent than Celia, but unfortunately our faces do not always reflect our characters.

Whenever a young man came to Tipton Grange, Dorothea thought that he must be in love with Celia. Sir James Chettam, for example, came frequently. Dorothea wondered whether Celia should marry him or not. She never thought that Sir James might want to marry Dorothea herself. If she had thought of it, it would have seemed ridiculous to her. She had no interest in a handsome friendly baronet, who always said 'Exactly' in reply to her comments, even when she had expressed uncertainty.

Dorothea had very childlike ideas about marriage. She dreamed of marrying a much older man - a scholar involved in some great work. The really delightful marriage, she thought, must be one where your husband was a sort of father and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it.

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One day, Sir James was invited to dinner at Tipton Grange with another gentleman: the Reverend Edward Casaubon. Dorothea had never met Mr Casaubon before. He was known in the area as a great scholar who was writing a book on religious history.

Sir James and Mr Casaubon sat opposite Dorothea at the dinner table. The contrast between them was extreme. Sir James had a pink face and red hair. He was a typical young Englishman in excellent health. Mr Casaubon was tall and thin. His face was pale, and his hair was grey. Dorothea thought his manners were very dignified. He listened patiently as Mr Brooke talked foolishly. Dorothea was embarrassed by her uncle's foolish conversation.

'Books, now, yes! I have read many books on all different subjects!' said Mr Brooke.

'I am reading a very interesting book at the moment,' said Sir James. 'It is full of excellent modern ideas about farming. I will try to put them into practice on one of my farms. Do you think that is a good idea, Miss Brooke?'

'I think that's a great mistake,' said Mr Brooke. 'It'll cost you a lot of money. The old ways are best, you know. Just let your tenants do the farming the way they've always done it. Then you can spend your money on new hunting dogs!'

'The land supports us all, rich and poor,' said Dorothea. 'Surely it is better to spend money on farming than on sport.'

She spoke with great energy, which was unusual in a young lady. Mr Casaubon looked at her with more interest than before.

'Young ladies don't understand political economy,' said Mr Brooke, smiling at Mr Casaubon. 'Have you read much about political economy, Casaubon?'

'No,' replied Mr Casaubon. 'I have no time to read modern writers. My eyesight is weak, and I must use it for my work. I should find someone to read aloud to me in the evenings, but it must be someone with a good reading voice. My work is all about the ancient world. Sometimes I think my mind is like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world, trying to reconstruct it as it used to be. But I must be very careful of my eyesight.'

Dorothea thought that Mr Casaubon was the most interesting man she had ever met. To reconstruct a past world! What noble work!

'Do you like riding, Miss Brooke?' asked Sir James. He had seen Dorothea riding a few days before. The fresh air had made her eyes shine and her cheeks pink. She had looked very charming. 'If you do, I will send you a horse.'

'No, thank you,' said Dorothea. 'I intend to give up riding.'

Dorothea did not want to talk to Sir James; she wanted to listen to Mr Casaubon. However, Mr Casaubon was not speaking at the moment. Mr Brooke was telling him that he had many documents, but he never knew where to find them.

'Let me organise your documents for you, uncle,' said Dorothea.

Mr Casaubon smiled and said, 'You see, Mr Brooke, you have an excellent secretary in the house.'

'No,' said Mr Brooke. 'I won't let young ladies touch my documents. Young ladies are too flighty.'

When the two girls were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said, 'How very ugly Mr Casaubon is! He is so pale.'

'It is better to be pale than to be as pink as a cochon de laitl!' said Dorothea.

'Dodo!' cried Celia in surprise.

Dorothea was clearly angry. 'Celia, you look at human beings as if they were animals in clothes. You can't see the great soul in a man's face.'

'Does Mr Casaubon have a great soul?' asked Celia ironically.

'Yes,' said Dorothea. 'I think he does.'

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Over the weeks that followed, Dorothea saw Mr Casaubon on several occasions. They had long conversations about his study - the Key to All Mythologies. Dorothea was convinced that he was an extraordinary man engaged in important research. When Mr Casaubon asked for her hand in marriage, she accepted him with gratitude. She felt that she was starting a new life full of real significance. 'With me at his side,' she thought, 'Mr Casaubon will be able to complete his life's work. I will read aloud to him, take notes for him, and comfort him when he's tired. I will learn how to live a great life, here - now - in England!'

When the neighbours heard of Dorothea's engagement, they were shocked. How could a lovely young woman marry a dry stick of a man over twice her age? Mrs Cadwallader, the vicar's wife, said that Dorothea had always been a strange girl. Sir James Chettam was deeply hurt and angry.

'The man has no red blood in his body!' he said to Mrs Cadwallader. 'He has no right to marry a lovely young girl!'

Mrs Cadwallader tried to comfort him. 'Don't worry, James,' she said. 'I think that Celia likes you,'

Sir James thought about Celia. She certainly was a charming and friendly young woman.

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During his engagement, Mr Casaubon spent a lot of time at Tipton Grange. These visits made progress on his Key to All Mythologies difficult. He looked forward to getting married: then he could return to work as usual. Mr Casaubon was surprised at how little passion he felt in Dorothea's presence. Perhaps, he thought, there was something wrong with her. But he could see nothing wrong with her, so he concluded that the poets had exaggerated the force of passion.

On one grey but dry day in November, Dorothea drove to Lowick - Mr Casaubon's house - with her uncle and Celia. The house was of dark stone, and the windows were small. Old trees stood in the grounds around the house, so that very little sunlight reached the windows.

'Oh dear!' said Celia. 'Freshitt Hall is much better than this!' Freshitt Hall was Sir James's house, built of white stone, with a portico and a garden full of flowers.

Dorothea liked Lowick. She liked the dark library and the gentle colours of the carpets and curtains. This was her future home. She looked at it with a kind of reverence. She did not wish to change anything.

Upstairs, Dorothea chose her future bedroom. It was decorated in blues and greens and had a large window. Looking around the room, Dorothea saw some miniature portraits. 'Who are these ladies?' she asked.

'That is my mother,' said Mr Casaubon. 'And the other lady is her sister.'

'The sister is pretty,' said Celia, implying that Mr Casaubon's mother was not.

'You never told me you had an aunt,' said Dorothea.

'My Aunt Julia made an unfortunate marriage,' said Mr Casaubon. 'Shall we walk in the garden?'

As they walked through the garden, they saw a young man with brown curly hair. He was sitting on a bench, sketching an old tree.

'Who is that?' asked Mr Brooke.

'He is a relative of mine. In fact,' said Mr Casaubon to Dorothea, 'he is the grandson of my Aunt Julia, whose portrait you saw upstairs. Let me introduce you. This is my cousin Mr Ladislaw. Will, this is Miss Brooke.'

Mr Will Ladislaw had the same grey eyes and delicate nose that Dorothea had noticed in his grandmother's portrait. He did not smile. He looked rather discontented. They exchanged a little polite conversation, then Will sat down again and the others continued their walk. As soon as they were out of sight, Will laughed aloud. Partly it was their discussion of his sketch that amused him and partly it was the thought of his dry old cousin as the lover of that girl.

'What is your cousin's profession?' asked Mr Brooke, as they walked on.

'He refuses to choose a profession. He studied at Heidelberg. Now he wants to go abroad again "for the culture", he says. I'm afraid my cousin is a dilettante. He does not like hard work. I have tried to talk to him about it, but he won't listen.'

'Do you give him the money for his travels?' asked Mr Brooke.

'Yes. I agreed to pay for his education and help him get started in life.'

'That's very kind of you,' said Dorothea. 'It's noble. I think we should all help each other.'

A few days later, Will left for Europe. He did not say exactly where he was going, because he believed that genius needs freedom. He did not, however, understand a much more fundamental fact: that genius is the power to make or do not everything in general but something in particular.

CHAPTER TWO

Mr Lydgate

One day, Mr Casaubon said to Dorothea, 'I'm sorry that your sister won't accompany us on our wedding-journey to Rome. You will have many lonely hours, Dorothea. I shall have to spend a lot of time in the Vatican Library. I would feel more at liberty if you had a companion.'

The words 'I would feel more at liberty' irritated Dorothea. For the first time when speaking to Mr Casaubon, she blushed with annoyance. Some days earlier, Mr Casaubon had suggested that Celia accompany them. Dorothea had asked Celia, and Celia had refused. 'I have no wish to impede your work,' said

Dorothea. 'I will be perfectly content on my own. Please don't mention it again.'

She had spoken in anger, but then she feared that she was wrong. She put her hand on his and said, in a gentler voice, 'Don't be anxious about me.'

That evening there was a dinner party at Tipton Grange. As soon as Dorothea and Mr Casaubon were out of sight, the guests began to discuss them. 'Miss Brooke is a fine woman,' said Mr Standish, the lawyer. He seemed to be speaking to Mr Bulstrode the banker, but Mr Bulstrode did not reply. He was a very religious man and did not like to participate in this kind of conversation about women.

Mr Chicheley, a middle-aged bachelor, said, 'Yes, but I don't like that kind of woman. I like them blond, with a certain way of walking, and a long thin neck like a swan. I prefer the mayor's daughter to Miss Brooke. If I wanted to marry, I would marry Miss Vincy.'

'Well, ask her, then!' said Mr Standish, laughing. 'It seems that middle-aged lovers are fashionable these days!'

Not far away, Mrs Cadwallader and Lady Chettam - Sir James's mother - sat together and discussed Mr Casaubon. 'How old is he?' asked Lady Chettam.

'He's over forty-five and in poor health. Studious men are never in good health. And his studies are so very dry. Really, standing there beside James, he looks like a death's head,' continued Mrs Cadwallader. 'In a year from now, that girl will hate him. She thinks he is wonderful now, but soon she will feel very differently!'

'IOh dear, what a very animated conversation Miss Brooke is having with Mr Lydgate!' said Lady Chettam. 'He's the new doctor, isn't he? Do you know anything about him?'

'Mr Brooke, who knows his uncle, says that he is one of the Lydgates of Northumberland, a very good family. Doctors of that kind are not usually from good families. And apparently he studied in Paris! That's unusual too.'

Mr Standish and Mr Bulstrode were also discussing the new doctor. 'I am glad that Dr Lydgate has come to Middlemarch,' said Mr Bulstrode. 'He is very well educated and familiar with modern medicine. He is interested in reform of the medical profession. I will ask him to be the manager of the new hospital.'

'I liked old Dr Hicks,' said Mr Standish. 'He was a good old-fashioned doctor. This new fellow sounds dangerous to me. He will do all sorts of experiments. I won't pay him to experiment on me!'

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Mr Lydgate left the party early. The only really interesting person he had spoken to all evening was Miss Brooke. She was young and beautiful, engaged to that dry old scholar, and interested in helping the poor: this was an unusual and intriguing combination of characteristics. 'She's kind-hearted and admirable,' he thought, 'but a little too earnest. Women like that are always asking questions, but they are too ignorant to understand the answers. Being married to such a woman must be exhausting, like coming home from work to teach a class in middle school. If one were married to a different kind of woman, coming home would be like going to paradise, with sweet laughs for bird-song and blue eyes for heaven.'

In fact, Lydgate was already fascinated by a young lady who was very different from Miss Brooke. He had known her as long as Mr Casaubon had known Dorothea, but Mr Lydgate and Mr Casaubon were very different men

in very different situations. Lydgate did not think that he was in love, but he had said of Miss Rosamond Vincy, 'She is graceful, lovely and accomplished. She is exactly what a woman ought to be.'

If he had wanted to marry immediately, he would have married her. However, he did not plan to marry for several years. At twenty-seven years old, he was poor and ambitious. He wanted to make great advances in medical science, to be remembered as an innovator in his field. He did not want to earn a lot of money but rather to work for the greater good of medical science.

Lydgate's parents had died when he was only eighteen years old. His father, a military man, had left very little money to his three sons. When Tertius said that he wanted to become a doctor, his guardians did not object. He was one of those rare people who decide early what they want to do with their lives.

He had a true vocation for medicine, and he studied hard.

His special interest was in the nature of fevers. He had been profoundly influenced by Bichat, who had suggested - but not proved - that all the organs of the human body were made of one primitive tissue. While in Middlemarch, Lydgate intended to work as a doctor in the community by day and as a researcher by night. He intended to prove Bichat's theory of the primitive tissue. That was his plan: to do good small work for Middlemarch and great work for the world.

With such a plan for the future, he could not marry for several years to come. Yet he found Miss Rosamond Vincy very charming. She had a delicate graceful figure and pure blond hair. Everyone agreed that she was the flower of Miss Lemon's school, the best school for young ladies in the county. There she had learned all a young lady's accomplishments.

The Vincys were an old manufacturing family, and Rosamond's father Mr Vincy was the mayor of Middlemarch. Mr Vincy's sister was married to Mr Bulstrode, the banker and philanthropist. Although Mr Bulstrode was not from Middlemarch - in fact his origins were something of a mystery - he was clearly a gentleman. Mr Vincy had been pleased when his sister married Mr Bulstrode. Such alliances made the family more acceptable to the neighbourhood gentry.

Rosamond's refined education had made her feel that she was too good for the young men in her social circle. When she dreamed of love and marriage, she always dreamed of someone from far away - a handsome stranger, a man of talent. When Lydgate came to Middlemarch, Rosamond soon began to imagine him as her fascinating stranger. He was tall and handsome with dark eyes. His manners and speech were gentlemanly. People said he was from a very good family. When he was in the same room with her, she was conscious of being watched. She knew that he found her attractive, and so she lost interest in all the other young men who were trying to win her favour.

One evening, there was a party at the mayor's house. When Lydgate arrived, he immediately began talking to Rosamond.

'I hope you will sing this evening,' he said.

'Have you studied music?' asked Rosamond.

'No, but it delights me.'

Lydgate was fascinated by her infantile blondness, her delicacy and her grace. She seemed always to say the right thing.

'I'm afraid to sing in front of you,' she said. 'My voice is good enough for my Middlemarch neighbours, but you have heard the best singers in Paris. I have only once been to London.'

'What did you see in London?'

'Very little. That is why I'm afraid of you. I'm just a simple country girl.'

'An accomplished woman always knows more than we men, though her knowledge is of a different sort,' said Lydgate. 'I'm sure you could teach me a thousand things - as an exquisite bird could teach a bear, if there were a common language between them. Fortunately, there is a common language between men and women, so the bears can be taught.'

Rosamond blushed with pleasure. She turned her long neck a little and raised her hand to her lovely hair.

Lydgate had no idea that she was already dreaming of their wedding. She had no reason to postpone matrimony. She had no scientific studies to

distract her from questions of love and marriage.

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Lydgate spent many hours with Rosamond at various parties. Polite society in Middlemarch was a small world. A pleasing young man like Lydgate received many invitations, but the guests at these parties were always the same. He had no idea that people were beginning to talk about his attentions to Rosamond.

In fact, he did not much care what other people thought of him in general. For example, he had offended the Middlemarch doctors without knowing that he had done so. His opinions about the correct ways to cure illnesses were different from theirs. When he gave his opinions, he implied that theirs were wrong, as indeed he thought they were.

Another thing that made some of the Middlemarch men distrust Lydgate was his association with Bulstrode. Bulstrode had built a new hospital for charity patients. He wanted Lydgate to manage this hospital, and Lydgate was glad of the opportunity to do so. Lydgate was often seen talking to Bulstrode. The banker was not a popular man because he was not born in Middlemarch and, more importantly, because his severe religious views made him unpleasant company. He disapproved of drinking, dancing, music and almost all the pleasurable things in life. He called them sinful and was constantly asking people to stop doing them. Lydgate too was from another part of the country and, though he did not seem particularly religious, his sense of his own superiority had a similarly chilling effect.

One day, while showing Lydgate around the new hospital, Bulstrode said, 'I imagine you're thinking of getting married soon.'

'No. Not for a long time yet. I've too much work to do,' said Lydgate.

'In that case,' said Mr Bulstrode, 'perhaps you should be more careful about your attentions to young ladies. This is a small town, and people talk.'

The banker had spoken in a friendly manner, but his meaning was clear. The family had delegated him to protect his niece's reputation.

Lydgate was unpleasantly surprised. He stopped accepting invitations. From that day onwards, Lydgate stayed at home in the evenings, reading.

Rosamond noticed his absence from parties. Indeed, parties seemed intolerably dull to her without him. She lost her appetite. She could think of nothing but Lydgate. Ten days passed in this way, but to Rosamond those ten days seemed an eternity.

On the eleventh day, Lydgate came to the Vincys' house to leave some medicine for Rosamond's father. Mr Vincy was not in. The servant asked Lydgate if he wanted to leave the medicine with Miss Vincy.

'Yes,' said Lydgate, entering the house.

He had some vague idea of joking with her about his absence from Middlemarch parties. He wanted them to be friends. But, when he entered the drawing-room, she blushed so deeply that he felt a corresponding embarrassment. Instead of joking about his absence, he asked her, almost formally, to give the medicine to her father.

When he first walked in, Rosamond thought that her happiness was returning. But then, when she heard his formal tone, she was deeply hurt. She went pale and replied, coldly, 'Yes. I'll give it to him.'

Lydgate could think of nothing else to say. He looked at her lovely face and saw that her lips were trembling. At that moment she was as natural as she had been at five years old. The tears came into her eyes, and there was nothing she could do to stop them.

For Lydgate, that moment of naturalness changed flirtation into love. He was very warm-hearted and impulsive. He certainly did not want to hurt this lovely young woman. Her eyes seemed to him like blue flowers under water. 'What is the matter? Please, tell me!' he said.

Rosamond made her little confession, and he spoke words of gratitude and tenderness. When he left the house, half an hour later, he was engaged to be married to Rosamond Vincy.

CHAPTER THREE

A wedding-journey to Rome

Forty years ago, George IV was the king of England, the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister, Mr Vincy was the Mayor of Middlemarch, and Mrs Casaubon, born Dorothea Brooke, went on her wedding-journey to Rome.

One day in December, Will Ladislaw was looking at the statues in the Vatican when his friend Naumann came up to him and said, 'Come and see this woman!' The two men went quickly and quietly down the corridor to another room where there was a beautiful marble statue of a Greek goddess. Standing near the statue was a lovely young woman dressed in plain grey clothes. She was not looking at the statue. Her large eyes were fixed dreamily on the sunlight coming through the window. Suddenly she noticed that she was being watched. Without looking at the two men, she turned and walked away.

'What a contrast!' said Naumann, when she was gone. 'There is antique beauty, pagan and sensual. And here is living beauty, full of the consciousness of Christian centuries! If I painted a picture of it, I would make her dress as a nun.'

'She's married to my cousin,' said Will. 'I didn't know that they were coming to Rome.'

'Do you mean that old man? I saw him with her earlier today. Go and visit them and introduce me to them. Maybe your cousin would like me to paint the lady's portrait.'

'I don't know if I shall visit them or not. And English ladies have better things to do than to model for you. If you painted her, you would only paint the outside. Language is a finer medium for representing women.'

'Yes, for those who can't paint!' said Naumann.

Will was offended and did not reply.

'I see,' said Naumann. 'You are in love with your great-aunt, and no one else can look at her! This is serious, my friend!'

'Don't joke about that lady, Naumann,' said Will, irritated. He suddenly felt that something had changed in his relation to her.

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Two hours later, Dorothea was in her apartment in the Via Sistina. I am sorry to say that she was sobbing bitterly. Mr Casaubon was in the Vatican. She did not expect him to come back for several hours. Dorothea had now been five weeks in Rome. She had seen the great ruins and the glorious churches, but she found it all rather oppressive. She preferred to go out to the country to be alone with the earth and the sky.

During these first five weeks of marriage, her idea of Mr Casaubon and her relation to him had gradually changed. Mr Casaubon himself had not changed: he was exactly the same. Before they were married, she had thought of his learning as a noble search for truth; but now it seemed a dry and depressing activity. His mind had seemed to her like a fine building, high on a hill, with panoramic views and lots of fresh air; now it seemed like a labyrinth, full of dark corridors that led nowhere.

Whenever he suggested that she should see a building or a work of art, he said, 'Most people think it worth visiting.'

If Dorothea asked him, 'But what do you think?', he replied, 'It is very famous.'

There is nothing more depressing for a passionate young mind than this kind of response, in which years of knowledge seem to have produced a complete absence of interest or sympathy.

It seemed to her that Mr Casaubon had forgotten the purpose of his own work. He spent his time writing sarcastic comments about other men's theories of the solar deities, and in doing so he had become indifferent to the sunlight.

She might not have noticed these things so soon if he had been warm and loving towards her, but he was not. She had a warm heart. She longed for someone to love and serve. She wanted someone to hold her hands and listen to her thoughts and tell her his own thoughts in return. But Mr Casaubon was not like that. He spent his days working, and in the evenings he often seemed still to be thinking about his research. He had not found marriage to be a

state of intense delight. Nevertheless, he intended to be a good husband, and hoped to make Dorothea happy.

That morning there had been an unpleasant scene between them. Dorothea had said to her husband, 'I hope you are satisfied with our time in Rome - I mean, as far as your studies are concerned.'

'Yes,' replied Mr Casaubon. 'I have made some interesting notes. They are not absolutely necessary to my study, but they are of interest. Fortunately, your company has prevented me from working too hard.'

'I'm very glad that my presence has made any difference to you,' said Dorothea. 'I hope that, when we get back to Lowick, I can be more useful to you.'

'Certainly, my dear,' said Mr Casaubon. 'I will need you to copy out and organise the notes I have made here.'

'Yes, your notes,' said Dorothea. 'And all those volumes of notes at Lowick. Don't you think that now may be the time to write your book? Will you decide what to include in the book and what to omit, so that the world can finally benefit from your vast knowledge? I will help you. I can be of no other use.' Dorothea ended with a sob and her eyes full of tears.

'My love,' replied Mr Casaubon. He seemed calm, even though her comment had hurt and shocked him deeply. 'I will know when the time has come to write my book. People who don't know what it is to work hard cannot understand true scholarship.'

'I realise that I cannot fully understand your work,' said Dorothea coldly. 'I simply wanted to be of use.'

Both were shocked by the situation. Each had been angry with the other. Neither of them felt able to say the gentle words that could restore tranquillity. Dorothea felt that all her efforts to participate in his life were coldly rejected. Mr Casaubon felt as if he had invited one of his critics into his home. Instead of comforting him when others criticised him, Dorothea was herself becoming critical.

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When her servant Tantripp knocked on the door, Dorothea quickly dried her eyes. 'Come in,' she said. Tantripp entered and said that a young gentleman had come to visit. She gave Dorothea a card on which was written the name 'Mr Will Ladislaw'.

'Thank you,' said Dorothea. 'I'll come downstairs immediately.'

Will stood up as Dorothea entered the drawing-room. He could see that she had been crying. She came towards him, smiling in an open friendly way, and shook his hand. He was several years older than she, but at that moment he looked younger, for he blushed suddenly.

'I didn't know that you and Mr Casaubon were in Rome until this morning, when I saw you in the Vatican Museum,' he said. 'I hope you are both enjoying your time here.'

'Thank you. Mr Casaubon is not here at the moment - he is very busy - but he will be glad to hear that you called.'

'If you will allow me, I will call again tomorrow when Mr Casaubon is here,' said Will.

'He goes to read in the Vatican Library every day. He's usually away from breakfast to dinner. But I'm sure he'll invite you to have dinner with us.'

Will had never liked Mr Casaubon. Now he felt angry with him. That dry old pedant had got this adorable young woman to marry him, and now he was passing his honeymoon away from her. The thought filled Will with a sort of comic disgust: he didn't know whether to laugh or insult Mr Casaubon at the top of his voice.

Will smiled at Dorothea, and she smiled back. Will Ladislaw's smile was delightful. His face seemed full of light. 'Something amuses you?' asked Dorothea.

'Yes,' said Will, quickly finding an excuse for his smile. 'I'm thinking of the first time we met, when you criticised my poor sketch.'

'Criticised?' said Dorothea in surprise. 'I can't criticise art. I am too ignorant about it.'

'You said that you couldn't see the relation of my sketch to nature.'

'That was really my ignorance,' said Dorothea. 'I rarely see any beauty in pictures, even those that are considered very fine.'

Will realised that she was entirely sincere. 'I enjoy the paintings here very much,' he said. 'But I probably learned how to enjoy them gradually. And I paint a little myself. That helps me to appreciate them.'

'Do you intend to become a painter?' asked Dorothea. 'Mr Casaubon will be glad to hear that you have chosen a profession.'

'Oh no,' said Will. 'I've decided not to become a painter. I have some friends here who are German painters. They are brilliant fellows, but they look at life entirely from the point of view of painting. I don't want to do that.'

'Yes, I understand,' said Dorothea. 'So many things seem more necessary than paintings. But if you have artistic talent, perhaps you should take that as your guide.'

'I'm afraid I don't have enough talent,' said Will. Her simple honesty made him feel that he could say anything to her. 'And it is useless for me to try to become a great painter through hard work. If things don't come easily to me, I never get them.'

'I have heard Mr Casaubon say that he wishes you were more patient,' said Dorothea, gently. She was rather shocked at his way of taking all life as a holiday.

'Yes, I know Mr Casaubon's opinion. He and I differ.'

The contempt in his reply offended Dorothea. 'You're certainly different,' she said, proudly. 'I never thought of comparing you. Mr Casaubon's diligence is rare.'

Will saw that she was offended, but he did not like to hear her defending her husband. 'Yes,' he replied. 'That is why it's such a pity that it's wasted. If Mr Casaubon could read German, he would save himself a lot of trouble.'

'What do you mean?' asked Dorothea, surprised and anxious.

'I mean,' said Will, casually, 'that the Germans have already done a lot of the work he is trying to do.'

Will did not realise what pain his words caused her. The idea that all her husband's hard work might be useless filled her heart with pity and anxiety for him.

When he saw the effect of his words, Will felt rather ashamed. 'I think it's a great pity. I especially regret it because Mr Casaubon has been so generous to me.'

Dorothea looked up at him with tears in her eyes. 'I was at school at Lausanne, and there were German teachers there, but I didn't study German. How I wish I had! If I could read German now, I could be of use to him.'

Will began to see why Dorothea had married Mr Casaubon. She had imagined some romantic role for herself in this marriage. If Mr Casaubon had been a dragon that had carried her away, Will would have rescued her and declared his love for her. But the situation was more complicated than that.

At that moment, Mr Casaubon came through the door. He was unpleasantly surprised to see Will there with Dorothea, especially since both of them seemed agitated. However, he was, as always, calm and polite. As he stood beside his young cousin, Mr Casaubon looked even more faded than usual. Will gave an impression of sunny brightness. When he turned his head quickly, his hair seemed to radiate light. Mr Casaubon, on the contrary, stood rayless.

Dorothea did not notice the contrast, though she did see that her husband looked sad. She felt pity and tenderness for him. For the first time, she saw him as he actually was, not as her girlish dreams had made him.

Mr Casaubon invited Will to dinner the following day. Will accepted the invitation and, seeing that his cousin was tired, left immediately.

Dorothea sat beside Mr Casaubon and said, 'Forgive me for speaking as I did this morning. I was wrong. I fear that I hurt you.'

'I'm glad you feel that, my dear,' said Mr Casaubon.

'But do you forgive me?' asked Dorothea with a sob.

'Yes, my dear. Don't distress yourself.' He wanted to tell her that she should not have received young Ladislaw in his absence, but he did not want

to criticise her at the moment of her penitence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Lowick

Mr and Mrs Casaubon arrived home from their wedding-journey in January. A light snow was falling. Lowick looked different to Dorothea now. In the grey winter light, it seemed dark and oppressive. During the first evening, she realised that, as mistress of Lowick, she had no duties. The servants did everything.

The morning after their arrival, Mr Casaubon got up early. He said he had slept badly and was not feeling well. Nevertheless, he went into his study to work immediately after breakfast. 'What shall I do?' Dorothea asked, and he replied, 'Whatever you like, my dear.' She felt as if she were in prison.

Back in her room, Dorothea looked at the miniature portrait of Mr Casaubon's Aunt Julia, who had made an unfortunate marriage. Was it only her family who thought that her marriage was a mistake, or did she herself regret it and cry about it in the silence of the night? Dorothea felt a new companionship with the portrait. It was the only object in the house that now seemed to have more interest and significance than it had possessed on her visit to Lowick nearly three months before. Julia was Will Ladislaw's grandmother. As Dorothea looked at the portrait, she imagined it changing gradually from a feminine face to a masculine one, full of light, which looked at her with great interest. Dorothea smiled at the portrait.

Just then Mr Brooke and Celia arrived. Dorothea ran downstairs to greet them.

'Hello, my dear!' cried Mr Brooke. 'You do look well! I'm sure you enjoyed Rome - happiness, frescoes, the antique! It's very pleasant to have you back. But Casaubon looks a little pale.'

Dorothea looked anxiously at her husband.

'You go off with Celia, my dear,' continued Mr Brooke. 'She has a great surprise for you, and she wants to tell you all about it.'

Dorothea and Celia went to the blue-green room together.

'Is Rome a nice place for a wedding-journey?' asked Celia, blushing.

'I don't think you would like it,' Dorothea replied, thinking, 'No one will ever know my opinion of a wedding-journey to Rome.'

'Mrs Cadwallader says that wedding-journeys are a mistake. She says you get tired of each other,' said Celia, blushing more deeply.

'Celia! Has anything happened? What is your great surprise?'

'Sir James has asked me to marry him!'

Dorothea took her sister's face in her hands and looked at her anxiously. Celia's face seemed more serious than it used to do. 'And are you happy?' she asked.

'Yes!'

'Oh, I'm so glad. Sir James is a good, honourable man.'

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One morning, a few weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea - but why always Dorothea? Is hers the only point of view from which to look at this marriage? I protest against all this interest in the young and beautiful. The old and ugly have feelings too. Mr Casaubon had done nothing wrong in getting married. When he met Dorothea, he thought she was the ideal wife for him. He did not ask himself if he was the ideal husband for Dorothea, but that was not Mr Casaubon's fault. Society never expects a man to ask if he is charming and handsome. He had hoped to make his wife happy and to find happiness himself.

The one great anxiety of Mr Casaubon's life was his Key to All Mythologies. The longer he worked on it, the more perfect - it seemed to him - the finished product had to be. He had published a few articles, and the critics had not liked them. The poor man had hoped to find comfort in marriage, but now he felt that Dorothea too was looking at his work critically. For that reason he did not want her to help him in the library, but she insisted, so that finally she joined him every morning to read aloud or copy notes.

One morning he said, 'Dorothea, here's a letter for you from Mr Ladislaw. He wrote to me as well.'

'Mr Ladislaw!' she said in surprise. 'I don't know what he wants to say to me, but I can imagine what he wrote to you.'

During one of their conversations in Rome, Will had told Dorothea that he intended to stop taking money from Mr Casaubon. He wanted to be independent. Dorothea admired him for his decision. In fact, Will wanted to be independent so that he need not feel ashamed of hating his benefactor and adoring his benefactor's wife.

'In his letter to me, he asks if he can come and stay with us. I'm sorry, Dorothea, but I will tell him that a visit is not convenient at present. I've too much work to do.'

They had not argued since that unpleasant morning in Rome. Their last argument had been so distressing that Dorothea had decided never to argue with him again. Nevertheless, when she spoke, her voice was angry. 'Why do you think I want him to visit, if you don't want it?'

'I don't wish to argue,' said Mr Casaubon. He started writing again, but his hand was trembling.

Dorothea too went back to work. Her hand did not tremble as she copied the notes. She was still angry with her husband. They had been working in silence for half an hour when Dorothea heard a book fall to the floor. Looking up, she saw Mr Casaubon with his hands on his heart, as if in pain. She leapt up and ran to his side.

'Can I help you, dear?' she said, her voice full of tenderness and anxiety. She led him to a large chair.

Just then, Sir James and Celia arrived. Sir James said, 'We must send for a doctor immediately! I can recommend Lydgate.

Do you want me to get him?'

Casaubon made a silent sign of approval. As he left the room, Sir James thought of how Dorothea looked, with her arms around her husband and that expression of deep sorrow on her face. 'Ah, what a noble creature she is!' he thought. He did not know that she felt shame and penitence as well as sorrow.

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Mr Casaubon stayed in bed for the next few days. Lydgate came often. On the third day, he asked if he could speak to Dorothea alone. They went into the library together.

'Mrs Casaubon, your husband has a disease of the heart,' began Lydgate. He did not want to distress her, but he felt he should be honest. 'He might live another fifteen years, but only if we are very careful. He should avoid all unnecessary stress and anxiety. He should try to work less and get more exercise.'

'He would be miserable if he had to give up his work,' said Dorothea.

'I know,' Lydgate replied. 'But we must try to vary and moderate his occupations. There is no immediate danger of another attack, but, on the other hand, death is often sudden in these cases.'

There was silence for a few moments. Dorothea looked as if she had been turned to marble. Finally she spoke: 'Please help me,' she said; 'Tell me what I can do.'

'Well,' said Lydgate. 'Perhaps you can travel to Europe together. That might be good for his health.'

'Oh no!' said Dorothea, tears filling her eyes. 'He does not like travel.'

'I'm sorry to have caused you such pain,' said Lydgate. He suspected that there was some deep sadness in this marriage, and he wondered what it was.

'I'm glad that you have told me the truth,' replied Dorothea.

'I won't say anything to Mr Casaubon. I'll just tell him not to work too hard. Anxiety of any kind might make him worse.'

'Oh, you are a wise man, aren't you?' cried Dorothea, with a sob in her voice. 'You know all about life and death. Help me. Tell me what I can do. He has been working all his life. He cares about nothing else. And I care about nothing else -'

For years after, Lydgate remembered this appeal - this cry from one soul to another. But how could he help her? All he could do was say, 'Goodbye, Mrs Casaubon. I will come again tomorrow.'

That evening, Lydgate told Rosamond about his conversation with Mrs Casaubon. 'She seems to have a very strong feeling for her husband, even though he is a formal studious man almost thirty years older than she.'

'Of course she is devoted to her husband,' said Rosamond. Lydgate was delighted that she seemed to think that a woman necessarily loved her husband.

At that moment, Rosamond was thinking, 'If Mrs Casaubon's husband dies, she will be a very rich woman', but she said, 'Is she very handsome?'

'She certainly is handsome,' Lydgate replied, 'but I haven't thought about it.'

***

Left alone in the library, Dorothea noticed Will's letters lying on Mr Casaubon's desk. She thought, 'I must put them away, so that he doesn't see them when he comes back to the library.' Mr Brooke was at Lowick that day. Dorothea gave him Will's letter to Mr Casaubon and said, 'Please write to Mr Ladislaw, uncle, and tell him about Mr Casaubon's illness. Tell him that we are sorry he can't come to visit.'

'All right, my dear.' Mr Brooke read the letter and decided that Will was an excellent writer and a very clever young man.

Mr Brooke, who was a magistrate, was thinking of running for Parliament. Recently, he had bought one of the local newspapers as a vehicle for his ideas on Reform. I'll need a clever young man to help me,' he thought. 'Someone who can write good speeches and editorials. This young Ladislaw is just the type of fellow I need.' Although Mr Brooke began his letter with the intention of telling Will not to come to Middlemarch, he ended it by inviting him to stay at Tipton Grange. He did not tell Dorothea what he had written in his letter, because he did not think that it was important.

So, several weeks later, Will came to Middlemarch and stayed at Tipton Grange. At first Dorothea was anxious about what Mr Casaubon might think of Will being her uncle's guest, but Mr Casaubon said nothing. He had never liked Will, and now he disliked him even more.

Sometimes Mr Brooke brought Will to Lowick. For Dorothea, Will's company was like a window opened in the wall of her prison, letting in fresh

air and sunshine. He listened to what she said, and his own conversation was lively and interesting.

But Will was dissatisfied. He wanted to see Dorothea alone. 'I will watch over her,' he said to himself. 'She will know that she has one slave in the world!' Dante and Beatrice did not see each other often; nor did Petrarch and Laura. But times had changed since then. Now it was better to have fewer sonnets and more conversation.

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One morning, Will went to Lowick when Mr Casaubon was not there. The servant showed him into the library, where Dorothea was sitting alone. 'Mr Casaubon is out. He may not be back until dinner,' she said, as she shook his hand.

'I really came in the hope of seeing you alone,' said Will. 'I wanted to talk to you, as we did in Rome. It always makes a difference when other people are present.'

'Yes,' said Dorothea. 'I enjoyed our conversations in Rome. It seems strange to me how many things I said to you.'

'I remember them all,' said Will. He felt that she deserved to be perfectly loved. And I think his own feelings at that moment were perfect. He was completely happy just to be in her presence.

'I've been learning Latin and Greek,' said Dorothea. 'I can be of more use to Mr Casaubon now. But the scholar's life is a difficult one. His work makes him so tired.'

'If a man is capable of great thoughts, he'll have them before he is old and tired,' said Will. He saw in her face that he had said too much. 'But it's quite true that brilliant men sometimes make themselves ill by working too hard.'

'I used to think that, even when I was a little girl. I thought that I would like to help someone who was doing great work. That was what I wanted to do with my life.'

'But you must be careful of your own health,' said Will. 'You look pale. Do you spend too much time in the house? Mr Casaubon should get a

secretary to help him.'

'I want to help him,' said Dorothea earnestly. 'If I didn't help him, I would have nothing to do. Please don't mention that again.'

'Certainly not, now that I know your feelings. But I've heard Mr Brooke and Sir James Chettam make the same suggestion.'

'Yes, they want me to ride horses and do the things that other women do,' she said, impatiently, 'but my mind has other wants. I thought you knew that.'

'Forgive me. At one time Mr Casaubon himself wanted a secretary. In fact, he asked me to be his secretary. But I was not good enough.'

'You didn't work hard enough?' asked Dorothea, smiling.

'No. But I have noticed that Mr Casaubon doesn't like anyone to know exactly what he is working on. He is too uncertain of himself. I know I didn't work hard enough, but the real reason he dislikes me is because I disagree with him.'

'Mr Casaubon paid for your education, even though he disliked you,' said Dorothea. 'That's admirable.'

'Yes. He has been honourable about that. My grandmother was disinherited because she married someone her family disliked. Her husband was a Polish refugee, a teacher. He had no money, but he was intelligent. He could speak many languages. My grandparents both died young. My father was very musical. He taught music for a living, but he never made much money from it. My mother was a rebel too, like my grandmother Julia: she ran away from home and became an actress. I don't remember much about my father, except what my mother told me. I remember when he was dying, and I was very hungry and had only a little bit of bread.'

'Ah! What a different life from mine!' said Dorothea. 'I have always had too much of everything. Tell me about it.'

'My father had written a letter to Mr Casaubon, and that was my last hungry day. My father died, but Mr Casaubon took care of my mother and I. Well, he has probably told you all this himself.'

'No,' said Dorothea. 'He never talks about his own honourable actions. You see, he's been very good to you, and now he's ill. Try not to dislike him.'

'I'll never complain about him again,' said Will. 'I'll never again do or say anything of which you disapprove.'

'That's very good of you,' said Dorothea, smiling. 'You make me feel like a queen. But soon you'll leave Middlemarch, and I won't be able to rule you any more.'

'I want to ask you about that. It's one of the reasons I wished to speak to you alone,' said Will. 'Mr Brooke has offered me a position as editor of his newspaper. If you don't think I should accept his offer, I'll say no. But, if you approve, I'll accept. I prefer to stay here than go away.'

'I think you should stay,' said Dorothea at once. At that moment, she saw no reason why she should say no.

'Then I will stay,' said Ladislaw.

But then Dorothea thought she had made a mistake. She remembered that her husband felt differently. She blushed deeply, angry with herself for having said something that opposed her husband's wishes. 'But my opinion isn't important,' she said. 'You should ask Mr Casaubon.'

He got up to leave. He wanted to ask her not to mention the subject to Mr Casaubon, but he was afraid to do so. She was so honest and sincere: he did not want her to change. And he was afraid that she might think less of him for asking it. So he just said goodbye and left the house.

At four o'clock, Mr Casaubon returned, looking happier than usual. 'I met Dr Spanning today, my dear, and he said some complimentary things about my article on the Egyptian Mysteries.'

'I'm very glad,' said Dorothea, delighted to see her husband smiling. 'It's a pity you weren't here earlier. Mr Ladislaw called. He mentioned that my uncle has offered him work as editor of his newspaper. Do you think he should accept the position?'

'Did Mr Ladislaw come to ask my opinion?' said Mr Casaubon. All the pleasure that had been in his face when he spoke of Dr Spanning was gone.

'No, but, when he mentioned my uncle's offer, he of course expected me to tell you about it.'

Mr Casaubon was silent.

The next morning, he wrote the following letter to Will:

Dear Mr Ladislaw

I hear that you have been offered a position on a Middlemarch newspaper. If you accept that offer, I will be offended. I have a high social position to maintain. Editing a newspaper is not, in my opinion, honourable and respectable work. If you accept the position, you will no longer ne welcome to call at Lowick.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Casaubon.

Mr Casaubon did not tell Dorothea about this letter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Waiting for death

Alone in her room that day, Dorothea thought about Will's grandmother. She thought that Julia had been disinherited unjustly. The money she should have inherited had gone instead to Mr Casaubon. In the will Mr Casaubon had written after their marriage, all that money was left to Dorothea. 'This must be changed,' she thought. 'I will talk to my husband and tell him that he should give Mr Ladislaw an income now and leave half his fortune to Mr Ladislaw in his will.'

She was blind, you see, to many things that were obvious to others. She did not see that this suggestion might make her husband angry. She did not understand that her husband was jealous of Will. She saw nothing outside her own pure intention.

That night, as they lay in bed in the darkness, Mr Casaubon said, 'Dorothea, since you are awake, could you please light a candle and read aloud to me for a while?'

'May I talk to you, instead?' asked Dorothea.

'Certainly.'

'I've been thinking about money all day. I've always had too much. And in the future, I'll have more money than I should. I'll have money that should have gone to someone else.'

'What do you mean, my love?'

'I mean that you've been too generous to me in your will. I've been thinking of your Aunt Julia. She was left in poverty because she married a poor man. I'm sure you agree that she was unjustly disinherited. That was why you paid for Mr Ladislaw's education. But surely Mr Ladislaw should have more - he should have half the property you've left me in your will. And I think he should have an income now. It's wrong that he's poor while we're rich.'

'Has Mr Ladislaw spoken to you about this?' asked Mr Casaubon, coldly.

'No!' said Dorothea, earnestly. 'He only told me a little about his parents and grandparents. I've come to this conclusion on my own, and I must speak about it, because I'm the person who'll benefit from the injustice.'

'Dorothea, my love,' Mr Casaubon replied, in a quiet but angry voice, 'this is not the first time you have given your opinion about things you don't understand. You shouldn't interfere between me and Mr Ladislaw, and you shouldn't encourage him to say things to you that are critical of my behaviour.'

Poor Dorothea was full of conflicting emotions. She feared that her husband's anger might cause him to be ill again, but at the same time she felt the intensity of her own misery. 'How can I bear this nightmare of a life?' she thought, as she lay in the darkness, unable to go to sleep.

The next day Mr Casaubon received the following letter from Will:

Dear Mr Casaubon.

You have been very generous to me in the past, but I don't agree with you about the position Mr Brooke has offered me. It will not make me rich, but it is not dishonourable work. I have a right to live where I want and do the work I want to do. I am sorry if my answer displeases you.

Yours sincerely,

Will Ladislaw

Poor Mr Casaubon was disgusted and suspicious. He felt sure that young Ladislaw intended to make him angry and to turn Dorothea against him. It was clear that Will wanted to stay in Middlemarch so that he could be near Dorothea. Mr Casaubon did not suspect Dorothea of infidelity, but he knew that she liked Ladislaw and was influenced by what he said. Mr Casaubon still thought that Dorothea had asked her uncle to invite Ladislaw to Tipton Grange. He had been too proud to ask her about it, and he was still proud and silent. But he had forbidden Ladislaw to come to Lowick, and he was planning another way to frustrate his young cousin's plans.

Sir James Chettam was very worried about the management of Mr Brooke's farms. Celia had given birth to a son a few months before. Sir James felt it was now his responsibility to see that all the family's properties were well managed. Mr Brooke's farms were in a terrible condition. His farmers were very poor and discontented. Sir James felt that this was bad for the entire neighbourhood. 'Perhaps Dorothea can persuade him to do something about it,' thought the young baronet. So one day he took Dorothea through Mr Brooke's estate on her way home from visiting Celia at Freshitt Hall. He explained to Dorothea exactly what was wrong with the management of her uncle's farms, then he said, 'I'm afraid I must leave you at Tipton Grange, but the carriage I will come soon to take you back to Lowick.'

So Dorothea entered her uncle's house and found him sitting in the library with Will Ladislaw. Will had been very bored all afternoon, helping Mr Brooke to organise his documents. When Dorothea walked in, Will blushed and stood up. He felt as if he had received an electric shock.

'Hello, my dear,' said Mr Brooke. 'How nice to see you.'

Dorothea kissed her uncle and shook Will's hand. 'Uncle,' she said. 'Sir James has just been telling me about your farms. He hopes that you will spend some money to improve them and hire a new farm manager. Tipton could be such a happy place, if it were managed more efficiently.'

'Yes, my dear,' said Mr Brooke nervously, 'but I've no plans to do anything like that at present.'

'Sir James thinks you'll do it because you are running for Parliament. You say you want Reform and better lives for the common people. If you want to make things better, you should start with your own farms. Think of poor Kit Downes, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one bedroom the size of this table! Think of the Dagley family: their house is full of rats! That is one reason I never liked the paintings here at Tipton Grange, uncle. I used to come home from the village, which was so dirty and poor, to the drawing-room here, full of pictures of simpering rich people. It seemed to me an attempt to delight in what is false instead of caring about the hard truth of our neighbours' poverty.'

Dorothea spoke with great energy. Will was full of admiration for her, but he felt that she was suddenly distant from him. A man is rarely ashamed

of feeling that he cannot love a woman as much when he sees a certain greatness in her. Most men feel that nature intended greatness for men.

'Yes, my dear,' replied Mr Brooke, 'but I don't agree about the paintings. The fine arts are very important.'

Just then a servant came in and told Mr Brooke that one of Dagley's sons had killed a rabbit.

'I'll come and talk to him,' said Mr Brooke, then, looking at Dorothea, he continued, 'I'll be gentle with him, don't worry, my dear, but the rabbits are mine. Dagley's son has no right to kill the rabbits.'

When Mr Brooke had left the room, Will said to Dorothea, 'May I speak to you? This could be my only opportunity.'

'What is it?' asked Dorothea, anxiously.

'Do you know that Mr Casaubon has forbidden me to come to Lowick?'

'No, I didn't know. I'm very sorry,' said Dorothea, thinking about the conversation with her husband in the darkness.

'He did so because he didn't want me to work for Mr Brooke, but I accepted the position anyway. He has no right to tell me how to live. There is nothing dishonourable about my work for Mr Brooke.'

'We had better not talk about it, since you and Mr Casaubon disagree,' said Dorothea.

'We'll never see each other now,' said Will.

'No. But I'll hear about you from my uncle.'

'I won't hear about you. No one will tell me what you are doing.'

'Oh, my life's very simple. I'm always at Lowick.'

'That's a terrible imprisonment!' cried Will, impetuously.

'No, don't think that,' said Dorothea. 'I've no desires for myself. I only wish I didn't have so much when others have so little. But I believe that if you desire what is perfectly good - even if you don't know what it is and can't accomplish it - you are part of the divine power against evil.'

'That is a beautiful mysticism -'

'Don't call it by a name. It is my religion. What's your religion? I mean, what belief helps you the most?'

'To love what is good and beautiful when I see it,' said Will. 'But I am a rebel: I don't feel obliged, as you do, to submit to what I don't like.'

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Lydgate and Rosamond had been married. Soon after returning from the wedding-journey, Lydgate went to Lowick. Mr

Casaubon had never asked Lydgate or Dorothea how serious his illness was. He did not want their pity. But now he was anxious. He needed to know how much time he had left to complete his life's work - the Key to all Mythologies. And another thing troubled him even more deeply: if he died soon, Dorothea might marry Will Ladislaw. This possibility made him furious.

On the day of Lydgate's visit, Mr Casaubon was walking under the yew trees in his garden, thinking about his anger and the reasons for it. 'When I married Dorothea,' he reasoned to himself, 'I had to take care of her well-being in case I died. I've left her a lot of money and property in my will, but that won't secure her well-being. On the contrary, a rich young widow is exposed to danger. She'll be easy prey for any man who can win her affection. Will Ladislaw is such a man. He has no principles. He'll marry her for her fortune and to revenge himself on me. She already believes that half the money I've left her in my will is rightly his. He's inconsistent and immoral. If Dorothea married him, she wouldn't be happy. It's my duty to prevent her from marrying him.'

When Lydgate arrived, the servant took him to the garden. Lydgate saw Mr Casaubon walking, with his head bent forward, deep in thought. Lydgate thought that Mr Casaubon looked even older and thinner than he had two months before.

'Hello, Mr Lydgate,' said Mr Casaubon. 'Could we walk together here under the trees? I wish to discuss something 'important.'

'Certainly,' Lydgate replied.

'I've been working on a book for many years. This work, which has taken up most of my adult life, is very important to me. Indeed, I hope it will

be an important contribution to my field of study as a whole. I might die before it is published. If so, I would like to leave it in such a state that it could be published after my death by - others.'

Here Mr Casaubon paused.

'You wish me to tell you how serious your illness is?' asked Lydgate, trying to help.

'Yes. I want to know the truth.'

'Then I will be perfectly honest with you, Mr Casaubon. You suffer from degeneration of the heart. Death is often sudden from this disease. On the other hand, you could live comfortably for another fifteen years.'

Mr Casaubon was grateful for Lydgate's plain speech. He knew it was intended as a sign of respect. 'Thank you, Mr Lydgate,' he said. 'I've just one more question. Did you tell Mrs Casaubon this?'

'Yes,' replied Lydgate. He wanted to explain why he had told Dorothea, but Mr Casaubon said began to talk about the weather.

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Dorothea noticed that her husband was more thoughtful than usual. She decided to visit Mr Lydgate to ask him about his recent conversation with Mr Casaubon. But when Dorothea arrived at Lydgate's house, the servant told her that he was not in.

'Is Mrs Lydgate at home?' asked Dorothea. 'Could I speak to her for a few minutes?' She could hear music coming from an open window: a piano playing and a man's voice. Then the music stopped and the servant came back and asked Dorothea to follow her to the drawing-room.

Rosamond was very surprised and pleased to see Mrs Casaubon. She always liked to talk to the gentry and to feel that they accepted her. On her wedding-journey, she had met her husband's uncle Sir Godwin Lydgate, and he had been very nice to her. She was glad that today she was wearing one of her most elegant and fashionable dresses. Dorothea herself was dressed plainly in white.

'Hello, Mrs Lydgate,' said Dorothea, looking admiringly at Lydgate's lovely bride. 'I'm so sorry to interrupt you. I wish to talk to Mr Lydgate.

Could you tell me where I can find him?'

Just then she noticed that Will Ladislaw was standing in the corner of the room. 'Oh! Hello,' she said. 'I did not expect to see you here.'

'My husband is at the new hospital,' said Rosamond.

'I could go and tell him that you wish to speak to him,' said Will eagerly, coming forward.

'No, thank you,' said Dorothea. 'I will go and speak to him there.

As the carriage drove off, Dorothea thought about her own behaviour. She had left the Lydgates' house very quickly. One reason was that she felt she should not talk to Will, because her husband did not wish her to do so. But there was another stronger reason. She was surprised to see Will Ladislaw passing his time singing with Mrs Lydgate in her husband's absence. Then she remembered that Will had passed time with her under similar circumstances, so surely there was nothing wrong with it. But Will was Mr Casaubon's relative. As Mr Casaubon's wife, she was expected to be kind to his cousin. Nevertheless, she now saw that Mr Casaubon had been displeased by his cousin's visits in his own absence. 'Perhaps I have been mistaken in many things,' said poor Dorothea to herself, and tears came into her eyes. She felt confused and unhappy.

Back in Mrs Lydgate's drawing-room, Will felt mortified. His chances of meeting Dorothea were rare, but he wished she had not seen him in Rosamond's drawing-room, passing his time among the Middlemarch middle classes, enjoying the company of the charming and musical Mrs Lydgate. Will stood up to leave. 'It is always fatal to have music or poetry interrupted,' he said. 'Can I come another day?'

'Certainly,' said Rosamond. 'You must admit that the interruption was a very beautiful one. Is she very clever?'

'I never thought about it,' said Will.

That's exactly what Tertius said when I asked him if she were handsome. What do you gentlemen think of when you're with Mrs Casaubon?'

'Herself,' said Will. 'When one sees a perfect woman, one never thinks of her characteristics - one is conscious of her presence.'

'I'll be jealous when Tertius goes to Lowick,' said Rosamond, smiling. 'He'll come back and think nothing of me.'

'That hasn't been her effect on him up to now. Mrs Casaubon is very different from other women. One never thinks of comparing them with her.'

That evening, when Lydgate came home, Rosamond said, 'Mr Ladislaw was here singing with me when Mrs Casaubon came in. He seemed distressed. Do you think he disliked her seeing him at our house? Surely your position is equal to his.'

'No,' Lydgate replied. 'If he was really distressed, it must have been for some other reason. Ladislaw doesn't care about social distinctions.'

'He's a good singer, but he wasn't very pleasant to me. Do you like him?'

'Yes. I think he is a good fellow. He's a bit of a dilettante, but I like him.'

'I think he adores Mrs Casaubon.'

'Poor devil!' said Lydgate, smiling and kissing his wife's hand.

'Why do you say that?'

'When a man falls in love, he neglects his work and spends too much money.'

'I'm sure you don't neglect your work,' said Rosamond.

'I have great ambitions, Rosy, and I'm sure you want me to be something better than a Middlemarch doctor.'

'What did Mrs Casaubon want to say to you?'

'She asked me about her husband's health. But then we talked about the new hospital, and I think she is going to give us two hundred a year. Isn't that splendid?'

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After his conversation with Lydgate, Mr Casaubon began the final stage of his research: deciding which of his notes to put in the book and which to omit. Every evening, Dorothea read aloud from his notes, while her husband walked back and forwards, saying 'That will go in the book' and 'We will omit that.'

Dorothea was tired and sad. This work seemed so hopeless to her.

One night, just before they went to sleep, Mr Casaubon said, 'Dorothea, if I die, will you carry out my wishes?'

Dorothea was not surprised. She had realised, during these last few days of intense work, that he wished her to prepare the Key to All Mythologies for publication after his death. She did not answer immediately.

'Do you refuse?' he asked, coldly.

'No. I don't refuse,' said Dorothea, 'but I can't promise to do something if I don't know what it is.'

'I'm asking you to trust my judgement: you refuse.'

'No, dear, no!' cried Dorothea. 'But can I think about it for a while? I desire with all my soul to comfort you. Please give me time. I'll answer you tomorrow.'

'Until tomorrow, then,' said Mr Casaubon.

Soon she could hear that he was sleeping, but she could not sleep. She lay awake thinking of all the days and months and years of work her husband was asking her to do. She no longer believed that the Key to All Mythologies contained important truths. Despite her poor education, she could see more clearly than he in this matter. Although she felt very sorry that her husband had wasted his life on this dry and empty work, now she began to feel more sorry for her own future than for his past. And yet, how could she refuse? 'If he lives for fifteen more years,' thought Dorothea, 'I'll certainly spend those years helping him with his work. So how can I tell him that I won't help him after his death? He's suffered so much; how can I add to the disappointment of his life?'

For hours Dorothea lay in this conflict, until, in the early hours of the morning, she finally fell asleep. When she awoke, Mr Casaubon was already

downstairs.

As Dorothea went to the library, she thought, 'I'll promise to do as he wishes, but later today, not now.'

When she entered the library, Mr Casaubon said, 'Good morning, my dear. I'm not feeling well this morning, so I won't work. I'll take a walk under the yew trees instead.'

'I'm glad to hear that. You seemed so anxious last night. You need to rest.'

'I hope you can calm my anxiety, Dorothea, by giving me your answer.'

'I'll come to you in the garden soon and give it to you,' said Dorothea.

When Mr Casaubon had gone out, Dorothea sat for a while in the library. She felt that she was going to sacrifice her own life in this promise. Finally, she went out into the garden. When she came to the yew trees, she could not see her husband. Then she saw him, sitting at a stone table. His arms lay on the table and his head on his arms. She thought, 'How tired he is!'

She walked up to him and said, 'Here I am. I'm ready.'

He did not reply. She thought he must be asleep. She put her hand on his shoulder and repeated, 'I'm ready.' Still he did not reply. She cried out in distress, 'Wake up, dear. I've come to give my answer.'

But Dorothea never gave her answer: her husband was dead.

Later that day, Lydgate sat by her bed. She was talking deliriously. She knew that Lydgate was there. She seemed to think it was right to explain everything to him. She told him all her conflicting thoughts of the night before. Again and again, she asked him to explain everything to her husband.

'Tell him I'll go to him soon: I'm ready to promise. But thinking about it was so terrible. It made me ill. Not very ill. I'll be better soon. Go and tell him.'

The day after Mr Casaubon's funeral, Sir James and Mr Brooke stood in the library at Lowick. Dorothea was still ill in bed.

'I wish she didn't have to know about this,' said Sir James, in disgust. 'We won't tell her until she is well again. As soon as she's able to move, we'll

take her to Freshitt Hall. Being with Celia and the baby will be the best thing in the world for her. Meanwhile, you must get rid of Ladislaw. Tell him he must leave Middlemarch immediately.'

'How can I do that?' asked Mr Brooke.

'My dear sir,' said Sir James angrily, 'you brought him here, and you give him the work that keeps him here!'

'Yes, but I can't dismiss him without giving a reason. Ladislaw's work has been very good.'

'It's unfortunate that he ever came here. Casaubon behaved very badly in writing this new part of his will. It was a mean action and an insult to Dorothea! Casaubon was clearly jealous of Ladislaw. The world will think that Dorothea gave him some reason to be jealous. It was mean and ungentlemanly of Casaubon to link Dorothea's name with this young fellow's in the will.'

'I don't think it's that important,' said Mr Brooke. 'Anyway, sending Ladislaw away won't stop gossip, you know,' said Mr Brooke. 'I could dismiss Ladislaw from his work on the newspaper, but I can't force him to leave Middlemarch if he doesn't want to go. Besides, Dorothea doesn't want to marry Ladislaw.'

'Casaubon's will says that, if she marries Ladislaw, she will get none of Casaubon's money. That will make everyone think that she does want to marry him. I don't believe that she does, but I suspect Ladislaw.'

'If I send him away,' said Mr Brooke, 'people will think that we don't trust Dorothea.'

'I suppose that's true,' said Sir James. Mr Brooke was pleased to have won the argument. The election was not far away. He needed Ladislaw to help him in his election campaign.

No gossip about Mr Casaubon's will reached Ladislaw. Everyone was talking about the coming election. Will Ladislaw was very busy preparing for it. Although Dorothea was always in his thoughts, he did not like people to speak to him about her. When Lydgate mentioned her to him, Will replied, 'I never see Mrs Casaubon, and I am not likely to see her in future.'

Will noticed that Mr Brooke invited him to Tipton Grange much less frequently than before. He concluded that Dorothea's family wanted to keep him away from her. 'They suspect me of trying to win the favour of a rich woman,' thought Will. 'But I'll show them that they are mistaken. I'm divided from her forever.'

He thought of leaving Middlemarch to prove that he was not the fortune-hunter they thought him to be. But the election was coming, and Will believed in Reform. He wanted to help Mr Brooke get elected and then to make sure that he actually voted in Parliament for the Reform Act. Will had worked so hard to do this that he could not leave now.

Mr Bulstrode lived with his wife at The Shrubs, a fine house in Middlemarch. One evening, as Mr Bulstrode was standing in his garden, he saw a strange man in black clothes walking up the path. As the man approached, Mr Bulstrode went pale. 'Hello, Nick!' cried the man. 'Do you remember me?' He sounded a little drunk.

'Certainly I remember you, Mr Raffles,' said Bulstrode, quietly.

'I still recognise you, though twenty-five years have changed us both! Come and shake my hand.'

Reluctantly, the pale banker shook the hand of this loud red-faced man.

'I see you've given up the London business and become a country gentleman,' said Raffles. 'The old lady must have died a long time ago. I suppose she never knew how poor her daughter was. Good Lord, Nick, you're pale! Let's go into the house together.'

In the evening of his life, Mr Bulstrode had thought of penitence as something private between himself and God. He had done many charitable works to compensate for his youthful sins. But now this horrible figure had come from his past, perhaps to humiliate him publicly and expose his sins to the world.

'Please don't call me "Nick". We were never intimate in the past,' said Mr Bulstrode, coldly.

'Ah!' replied Raffles. 'I always called you "Nick" in my heart and in memory. My feelings for you have matured like fine old cognac. I hope you've got some in the house now.'

They reached the house, and Mr Bulstrode told the servant to take care of his guest. When he was alone with Raffles in the dining-room, Bulstrode said, 'We don't like each other, Mr Raffles, so you'd better leave here as soon as possible. You're welcome to stay the night, but tomorrow morning you should tell me what business brings you here and then leave.'

'I'll gladly stay the night,' said Raffles. 'I might even stay longer. It's a nice place.'

'Why didn't you stay in America?' asked Bulstrode. 'I thought, when I gave you the money to go, that you wanted to spend the rest of your life there.'

'I did spend ten years there, but I didn't like it. I won't go back.'

'Do you want me to find work for you?'

'No, thank you. I'm not as strong as I once was. I want an independent income.'

'If you promise to stay away from me, I'll give you one,' said Bulstrode.

'I don't promise anything,' replied Raffles. 'Years ago, you made a lot of money from my silence. I could've told the old woman that I'd found her daughter and grandchild. You paid me very little for my silence then. Now the old woman is dead, and you have all her money. I looked for Sarah Dunkirk again, later on, though I didn't tell you. I discovered her husband's name. What was it now? Something beginning with an "L"... Anyway, I don't promise anything. I'm a free man, and I'll return if I want to. Why don't you give me two hundred pounds? Then I'll go away tomorrow.'

Mr Bulstrode agreed to give him the money the next morning. As Raffles began to eat his dinner, he suddenly remembered the name. 'That's it!' he cried. 'Ladislaw!'

The next morning, Mr Bulstrode gave Raffles two hundred pounds and watched in relief as the coach took him away from Middlemarch.

CHAPTER SIX

The widow and the wife

When Dorothea had been at Freshitt Hall for a week, Celia told her about the new part of Mr Casaubon's will. Dorothea blushed deeply then went pale. The news seemed to make everything different. He husband had kept secret his true feelings. She had never thought of Will Ladislaw as a possible lover. Now she knew that her husband had thought of him in that light, and she wondered if Will himself had done so. Celia did not notice how much the news had distressed Dorothea. She continued playing with the baby and talking: 'I never liked Mr Casaubon, Dodo, and neither did Sir James. Now that he is gone, you should try to enjoy life more.'

Just then, Lydgate came in. 'How are you, Mrs Casaubon? You look ill. Has something distressed you?'

Celia said, 'She wants to go to Lowick to look at her husband's papers. I don't think she should go, do you?'

'I think Mrs Casaubon should do exactly what she wants to do,' replied Lydgate.

'Thank you,' said Dorothea. 'I get anxious sitting here, doing nothing. There is so much for me to do at Lowick.' Then she began to cry.

Before he left Freshitt Hall, Lydgate asked to see Sir James. 'Let Mrs Casaubon do as she likes,' he said. 'She needs perfect freedom.'

Dorothea went to Lowick and looked through all Mr Casaubon's papers. When she saw her husband's instructions for the publication of the Key to All Mythologies, she wrote a note to him and locked it in her desk:

I couldn't follow these instructions. Don't you see now that I couldn't submit my soul to yours by working hopelessly at something I don't believe in?

Dorothea.

Now there was no living man for Dorothea to pity. Besides, she now knew that Mr Casaubon had been secretive and suspicious. She wished that she could renounce the property he had left her in his will, but she felt that property was a responsibility that she should not ignore.

For three months, Dorothea stayed at Freshitt Hall, but made frequent visits to Lowick. During that time the elections were held. Despite Ladislaw's hard work, Mr Brooke lost the election. His reputation as a bad landlord had made him many enemies in Middlemarch. He decided to give up politics and sell the newspaper.

Shortly after the election, Dorothea moved back to Lowick. 'She will get depressed living alone in that miserable house,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'She really should get married again as soon as possible.'

The real reason for Dorothea's return to Lowick was her deep desire to see Will Ladislaw. One morning, she was sitting in the drawing-room, looking out of the window, when Tantripp entered and said, 'Mr Ladislaw is here, Madam.'

'Bring him in, please,' said Dorothea.

When Will walked into the drawing-room, Dorothea blushed deeply. She felt that this meeting - which she had wanted so much - was too difficult. Both of them were nervous and agitated.

'I am leaving Middlemarch,' said Will. 'I wanted to say goodbye to you. I hope you don't mind me coming here.'

'I'm glad you came. Are you leaving Middlemarch immediately?'

'Very soon. I'm going to study law in London. I like political work, and I want to be qualified to do it. Other men have won honourable positions for themselves without the help of family connections and money.'

'That makes it all the more honourable,' said Dorothea. 'My uncle says you speak in public very well and that you care about justice for everyone. I'm so glad. When we were in Rome, I thought you only cared for poetry and art.'

'So you think I should go away from here and stay away for years, until I have succeeded in some profession?'

She did not answer immediately. She looked out of the window at the roses in the garden. She assumed that Will had heard about Mr Casaubon's mean action. She thought, 'He never felt anything but friendship for me.'

Finally, she replied, 'Yes. I'll be happy to hear that you have found a profession. But you must be patient. It could take a long time.' Her voice trembled a little.

'You'll forget about me,' said Will.

'No, I'll never forget you,' she said, smiling.

Will blushed and leapt up. 'Good God!' he cried passionately. He looked almost angry. He wanted to tell her that he loved her, but he could not. 'Others will think I want her money,' he said to himself. 'I won't let them think that. And I'm afraid of what she might think.'

Just then, Sir James arrived.

'I must say goodbye, Mrs Casaubon,' said Will, and, bowing to Sir James, he left quickly.

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Rosamond was expecting a baby. Lydgate was very glad to hear the news, although it meant more expenses. He was finding married life very expensive indeed. Rosamond liked everything to be the best.

He told Rosamond that she should stop horse riding, now that she was expecting a baby. But Rosamond was used to doing what she liked. In June, Lydgate's cousin came to stay with them. Rosamond was very pleased to have a baronet's son as her guest. Captain Lydgate was very attentive to Rosamond and paid her many compliments. It gave Rosamond great pleasure to be admired by other men as well as her husband. Fortunately, Tertius was not a jealous husband, and often he left her alone with the Captain.

'Why don't you talk to the Captain more?' asked Rosamond one day, when they were alone.

'Because, my dear Rosy, the man's a fool,' replied Lydgate. 'Ask Ladislaw what he thinks of the Captain. He has almost stopped visiting us ever since that man came here.'

Rosamond thought she knew why Mr Ladislaw disliked the Captain: he was jealous. This thought pleased her very much.

One day, the Captain asked Rosamond to go riding with him. Rosamond agreed to go. She did not tell her husband, but she enjoyed it so much that she told him afterwards. She said she planned to go again the following day. Lydgate was furious. 'You shouldn't have gone riding, and you won't do it again, Rosy,' he said firmly. It was a statement, not a question, and therefore required no reply from Rosamond. She was pleased that she had not made a promise.

The next day she went out with Captain Lydgate again. Rosamond's horse was frightened by the sound of a falling tree, and she was frightened too. She became ill and lost the baby. In all future conversations on the subject, Rosamond was certain that horse riding had made no difference. 'If I'd stayed at home, I would have lost the baby anyway,' she said.

'Poor darling!' said Lydgate, but he was amazed at the terrible tenacity of this delicate creature. He felt he had no power over her. Affection did not make her obedient. She did whatever she liked.

Soon Rosamond was in good health again and looking as lovely as ever. Lydgate stopped worrying about her and returned to other worries. He was very deeply in debt. He could not ask his father-in-law for help: Mr Vincy had money troubles of his own. Lydgate decided to tell Rosamond about their debts. It was clear to him that they had to live more modestly from now on. Rosamond liked to give parties, and everything she bought was of the very best. He had to explain to her that they must economise.

One evening, Lydgate said, 'Rosy, I've something unpleasant to tell you. We're in debt. If we don't live more modestly, we'll get more and more into debt as time goes on.'

Rosamond was silent for a few moments. Finally, she looked at him and replied, 'What can I do, Tertius?' For a moment, Lydgate remembered when Dorothea, speaking of her sick husband, had used almost the same words but with such a very different meaning: 'Help me. Tell me what I can do. He has been working all his life. He cares about nothing else. And I care about nothing else -'

Lydgate felt sad. Rosamond's reply had sounded so distant, so indifferent. But she was not indifferent: she had spent her life dreaming of beautiful things. The idea that she could not have the things she wanted shocked and distressed her. Tears came into her eyes.

'I'm sorry, Rosy. It's all my fault,' said Lydgate.

'We must leave Middlemarch,' said Rosamond. 'Let's go to London.'

'We can go nowhere without money,' Lydgate replied. 'Your uncle will help us.'

'No, Rosy. You must take my judgement on things you don't understand. I don't expect any help from my uncle, and I won't ask him for help.'

Rosamond sat perfectly still.

'We'll have to return some of the silver to the shop where we bought it,' said Lydgate. 'I hope that we will not have to sell the furniture and the house, but that too may happen if we are not careful. Come, darling. Try not to worry. We can solve these problems.'

Ever since Raffles had told him the name of Sarah Dunkirk's husband, Mr Bulstrode had been wondering what he should do. For days he thought about Raffles and about the sins in his own past. Finally, he wrote a letter to Will Ladislaw, asking him to come to The Shrubs that evening. Will was not surprised to receive this invitation. He assumed Bulstrode wanted to talk about some business to do with the election.

'I invited you here, Mr Ladislaw,' began Bulstrode, 'to discuss a very private matter. I have a confession to make to you. I make it only because I will be judged by God. Human law cannot touch me.'

Ladislaw had always been sensitive on the question of the honour of his family. He was now afraid of what Bulstrode might tell him.

'Is it true that your mother's name was Sarah Dunkirk and that she ran away from her family to become an actress?'

'Yes,' replied Will.

'Do you know anything about your mother's family?'

'No,'

'Sarah Dunkirk's mother became my wife,' said Bulstrode. 'She was rich, and, when she died, she left all her money to me, because she couldn't find her daughter. Is your mother still alive?'

'No,' said Will, standing up as if to leave. He felt suddenly angry. He did not want to have any connection with this man.

'Please sit down, Mr Ladislaw,' said Bulstrode, anxiously. 'I wish to compensate you - to give you the inheritance your mother never received. I am not obliged to do this by law: I am doing it merely as an act of conscience.'

'Did you know where to find my mother?' said Will.

Bulstrode turned pale. He had not expected his generous offer to be met in this way. 'Yes, I did. But now I'm penitent and wish to do the right thing before God. I assume that you will accept my offer, Mr Ladislaw.'

Will looked at him angrily. 'Before I reply, I want to know what my grandmother's business was and why my mother ran away from home.'

'It was a shop,' said Bulstrode, nervously, 'a pawnbroker's shop. Sarah thought that it was a dishonourable business. That's why she ran away from home.'

'She was right,' cried Will. 'It is a dishonourable business!'

Bulstrode blushed with anger. He had been prepared for humiliation, but this was too much. This young man, who he had hoped to help, was acting like a judge.

'My honour is important to me,' said Will. 'And now I find that there is dishonour in my family. My mother ran away from it, and so will I. I refuse your offer. Goodnight, sir.'

As the weeks passed, Lydgate's money worries got worse, and the possibility of being forced to sell the house and the furniture grew more and more likely. Poor Rosamond had found marriage very disappointing. Before they were married, she had seen Lydgate as a romantic stranger. She had thought, 'If I marry him, he'll make my life delightful'. But in fact married life was not delightful: it was full of everyday details that were not what she

had wished and hoped. His scientific studies seemed to her a sinister vampire's occupation. She felt that her husband had managed things badly, and she thought that her own judgement was superior to his.

Until he had left the neighbourhood four months before, Ladislaw's company had been pleasant and exciting for her, but now he was gone. Rosamond felt bored without him. She dreamed of an invitation to Sir Godwin Lydgate's house. She dreamed of a life in London with no money worries.

Finally, she decided to take action. Without telling her husband, she wrote a letter to Sir Godwin, explaining their troubles and asking for help. A week later, Lydgate came into the drawing-room with a letter in his hand. His face was pale with anger.

'I can't live with you, if you are always doing things I ask you not to do!' he cried, handing her the letter.

Rosamond too changed colour as she read.

Dear Tertius. Don't get your wife to write to me when you want something. I thought you had more dignity than that. I cannot five you a thousand pounds or even half that sum. My own family uses up all my money I have always wished you well, but now you must consider yourself completely independent from me. Your affectionate uncle, Godwin Lydgate

'This is not the first time this has happened, Rosamond,' said Lydgate angrily. 'Time and time again, I have expressed a wish, you have seemed to accept my wish, and then you have secretly disobeyed me.'

Rosamond sat in silence, waiting for his anger to pass. No argument could persuade her that she had done something wrong. In her own view, she was the innocent victim of unpleasant circumstances. Lydgate thought of their future together. 'She will stop loving me,' he thought. 'How sad our life together will be then!'

Finally, she looked at him with tears in her eyes. 'I only tried to help,' she said gently. 'It's very hard to be disgraced here, among all the people we know, and to live in such a miserable way. I wish I had died with the baby.'

Her gentle tears and words touched Lydgate's heart. He put his arm around her. 'It is much more difficult for her than it is for me,' he thought.

'She has no life outside the home, as I have.' He wished to excuse her everything if he could, but to excuse her was also to think of her as another and weaker species.

Nevertheless, she had mastered him.

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Will's departure from Middlemarch had been delayed, but now, after his meeting with Bulstrode, he finally prepared to leave. Then he remembered that he had left some of his sketches at Tipton Grange. He rode out to get them on his last day in Middlemarch.

That morning, Dorothea went to Freshitt Hall to see Celia and Sir James. Mrs Cadwallader was there too, repeating all the gossip she had heard in Middlemarch. 'Everyone is talking about Mr Ladislaw,' she said. 'He spends all his time singing with Mrs Lydgate while her husband is at work.'

'That is not true!' cried Dorothea. 'Or at least it is a misrepresentation. I do not want to hear people speaking evil of Mr Ladislaw. He has already suffered too much injustice.' As she spoke, she blushed deeply, and her lips began to tremble. Then, calming herself, she stood up. 'Anyway,' she said, 'I must leave now. I'm going to Tipton Grange. Goodbye.'

As she drove along in the carriage, the world seemed suddenly ugly and horrible. Her eyes filled with tears. 'It's not true!' she cried, although she could not forget the day she had found Will with Mrs Lydgate and heard his voice accompanied by the piano.

When she got to Tipton Grange, the servant told her that her uncle was out but Mr Ladislaw was in the library.

Dorothea entered the library, shook his hand, and sat down. 'I'm very glad to see you,' she said. 'I thought you had left Middlemarch weeks ago.' Her voice trembled a little.

'After our last meeting, I discovered things that have changed my plans for the future,' said Will. 'When I last saw you, I thought I might come back some day. But now I don't think I ever shall.'

'Did you want to tell me the reasons?' she asked, timidly.

'Yes,' Will replied. 'Since I said goodbye to you, I have found out about Mr Casaubon's will. It's a terrible insult. I'm not a fortune-hunter. There was no need to protect you from me. The fact that you are rich was protection enough.'

'I know,' said Dorothea.

He walked to the window. She rose and came up to him there, but he turned and walked to another part of the room. Dorothea was hurt by this. He seemed no longer to like and trust her as he had always done in the past.

'I must go,' he said. 'I must go and live somewhere else, without happiness or hope. What I care for more than anything else is forbidden to me. I don't just mean forbidden to me by others. I mean forbidden to me by my own pride and honour. I'll go on living like a man who has seen heaven in a dream.'

Dorothea could not be sure that he was talking about his relation with her. Perhaps he was talking about his relation with Mrs Lydgate. Perhaps he was confiding in her as a friend.

Will was not surprised by her silence. He longed for an assurance that she loved him, but he knew she could not say so, even if it were true. They shook hands, and he walked towards the door.

'Please remember me,' said Dorothea, with a sob in her voice.

'Why do you say that?' asked Will, irritated. 'I'm in danger of forgetting everything else.' And he walked out of the room.

Dorothea sat down. Her heart was beating fast. He loved her!

Now she knew it for certain. She was filled with joy. At that moment it was easier to say goodbye. The knowledge of loving and being loved made her forget her sadness and feel strong.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A temptation

Lydgate's only hope was to get a loan from Bulstrode. He did not want to do this, because he disliked the banker and knew that most people in Middlemarch disliked him. Until now, he had considered himself totally independent of Bulstrode. His work at the new hospital had been done because Lydgate himself was interested in charity and public health. But with these terrible debts, he could no longer be independent.

Bulstrode asked Lydgate to come to his office at the bank to discuss the new hospital. 'I am no longer young, Mr Lydgate, and my health is not good,' said the banker, 'so I'm going to retire from some of my business interests. I'll move away from Middlemarch, to a place by the sea. It'll be better for my health. I'll also retire from the management of the new hospital. I've talked to Mrs Casaubon, and she says that she might take over my part in the financing of the hospital.'

'I'm sorry to hear that you are leaving the hospital,' said Lydgate. 'You know that the other Middlemarch doctors disagree with my methods. With your support, I was able to treat fevers as I thought they should be treated. That is especially important, now that we have a case of cholera in town.'

'Nevertheless, I can't give any further financial help to the hospital,' said Bulstrode.

Lydgate thought that Bulstrode must have money problems of his own, but asking the banker for a loan was his last hope, and so he explained about all his debts and asked for a loan of one thousand pounds. Bulstrode said that he could not help. He advised Lydgate to go bankrupt.

Lydgate felt that the banker had no human sympathy, but in fact Mr Bulstrode was too preoccupied with his own worries to help anyone else. In the past few months, Raffles had come back to Middlemarch several times. Each time, Raffles went into Middlemarch and got drunk in the public houses. Bulstrode was afraid that Raffles might tell his secrets in town, so he gave the man money to go away.

The day before, Raffles had come back to The Shrubs. He was ill. Mr Bulstrode put him to bed in his own bedroom. He told his wife that he was taking care of a miserable creature, the victim of vice, as an act of Christian charity. The fever had made Raffles delirious: he was speaking plainly about those facts in the past that Bulstrode wanted to keep secret. Bulstrode was afraid that someone might hear, so he sat by the sick man's bed and allowed no one else to enter the room. He sat up all night, praying.

When Bulstrode returned from the bank after his conversation with Lydgate, Raffles was worse. Illness had changed him: instead of being loud and sarcastic, he was now timid and frightened. Bulstrode sent a note to Lydgate, asking him to come to The Shrubs. Sitting by the bed, waiting for Lydgate, Bulstrode thought that perhaps God intended to save him from disgrace and humiliation after all. Raffles might die. Bulstrode prayed: 'Thy will be done'.

When Lydgate arrived, Bulstrode spoke to him outside the room. 'I've asked you to come, Mr Lydgate, because an unfortunate man is here and is seriously ill. His name is John Raffles. He worked for me many years ago. I feel it's my duty to help him.'

When he had thoroughly examined the patient, Lydgate spoke to Bulstrode in private again. 'He must stay in bed. Someone should watch him all the time.'

'I'll watch him.'

'Have you no servant who could do it?'

'Yes. I have Mr and Mrs Abel, but they are inexperienced. I'll watch the patient, and they can help me if necessary.'

'All right. Then I'll give my instructions to you,' said Lydgate.

'Don't give him any alcoholic drinks. He'll ask for them, but you must refuse him.'

'It is serious?' asked Bulstrode.

'I'm not sure. He was a strong healthy man before he fell ill. If you follow my instructions, he should get better in a few days. On the other hand,

he might get worse. We'll have to wait and see. I'll come again tomorrow morning.'

As Lydgate rode away, he thought about the treatment of cases of alcoholic poisoning such as this. Most doctors in Britain at the time believed that patients with this illness should be allowed to drink alcohol and be given large doses of opium. Lydgate was completely against this treatment. Whenever he had treated cases of alcoholic poisoning in the past, he had forbidden alcohol and opium, and his patients had got better.

Lydgate did not wonder why Bulstrode was taking care of Raffles. He supposed that the sick man was the object of Bulstrode's Christian charity. 'I wish he had the same feelings of Christian charity for me!' he thought. He was on his way home to tell Rosamond that his last hope of paying the debts was gone. She had told him that, if the furniture had to be sold, she would go back to her father's house. As he rode along, Lydgate thought how different these troubles would be, if he had a loving companion to share them.

Bulstrode sat by the sick man's bed, deep in thought. He, wanted Raffles to die, but he intended to do nothing to cause that death. He intended to follow Lydgate's instructions exactly.

Now he deeply regretted having refused to give Lydgate a loan that morning. If he had given Lydgate the loan, Lydgate would have felt obligated to him. What if Raffles spoke deliriously while Lydgate was there?

The next day, Lydgate came at noon. Bulstrode noticed that the doctor looked pale and tired. Raffles was worse: he had refused to eat, and he had not slept: he had been awake, feverish and delirious, all night.

'I think we should give him a little opium - very little - just to make him sleep,' said Lydgate. 'Give him three drops of opium every half hour for two hours, then stop. It is very important that you stop after two hours. Don't let him drink anything alcoholic, and make sure the dose of opium is exactly as I told you.'

'You yourself are looking ill, Mr Lydgate,' said Bulstrode.

'I told you of my troubles yesterday,' said Lydgate, coldly.

'Yes. I've thought about your situation, and I've decided to help you. I think you said that you need a thousand pounds. If you wait a moment, I'll

write you a cheque for that amount.'

'Thank you, Mr Bulstrode,' said Lydgate, suddenly full of joy and relief. As he rode home to tell Rosamond the good news, he did not wonder why Bulstrode had changed his mind.

At six o'clock, Bulstrode gave Raffles the first dose of opium, following Lydgate's instructions exactly. Half an hour later, he called Mrs Abel.

'Will you please sit with the patient tonight, Mrs Abel? I'm very tired. I must sleep.'

'Certainly, sir,' said Mrs Abel. 'What should I give him?'

'Give him three drops of opium every half hour. Give him soup or water if he asks for it. If you need any help, call your husband.'

Mr Bulstrode went downstairs. He was not worried that Raffles might talk in Mrs Abel's presence: the opium had made his speech incoherent. He sat in the drawing-room for a long time, thinking about Raffles. Suddenly he realised that he had not told Mrs Abel when to stop giving the opium to Raffles. He went upstairs, thinking, 'Perhaps she has already given him too much. I'm tired. It's not surprising that I forgot part of Lydgate's instructions. Should I go to my own room, or should I tell Mrs Abel when to stop giving him the opium?' He paused in the corridor by the door to the room. He could hear the sick man talking incoherently. 'Perhaps,' thought Bulstrode, 'Lydgate is wrong. Perhaps more opium will help Raffles.' Mr Bulstrode went into his own bedroom.

A few minutes later, Mrs Abel knocked on Mr Bulstrode's bedroom door. 'Excuse me, sir. Should I give the poor man some cognac? He says that nothing else will save him. He says he'll die without it. And I remember, sir, that when my master Mr Robinson was ill, the doctor said to give him cognac all the time.'

Mr Bulstrode did not answer immediately. Then he gave Mrs Abel a key and said, 'There is plenty of cognac downstairs in the wine cellar.'

The next morning, when Lydgate arrived, Raffles was clearly dying. Lydgate was disturbed about the case. Had Bulstrode followed his instructions exactly? Lydgate did not want to ask Bulstrode that question: it seemed like an insult. And Bulstrode was Lydgate's benefactor. An hour later,

Raffles died. 'Well,' thought Lydgate, 'the man is dead. There is no point in implying that it was someone's fault. After all, my instructions might have been wrong.'

Five days after the death of Raffles, three Middlemarch men - Mr Bambridge, Mr Hawley and Mr Hopkins - were standing outside their favourite public house when Mr Bulstrode walked by. 'That reminds me!' said Mr Bambridge. 'When I was in the village of Bilkley last Wednesday, I heard an interesting story about Bulstrode. Do you know how he got his money? He married an old woman when he was young. He let her think that her daughter and grandchild were dead, even though he knew they were alive. Then, when the old woman died, he got all her money!'

'Who told you that?' asked Mr Hawley.

'A drunken old man in the public house at Bilkley,' said Mr Bambridge.

'What was his name?' asked Mr Hawley.

'Raffles.'

'Raffles?' cried Mr Hopkins, the undertaker. 'I did his funeral yesterday! Bulstrode was there. His servant told me that Raffles died in Bulstrode's house.'

'Did any doctor see him?' asked Mr Hawley.

'Yes. Lydgate,' said Mr Hopkins.

Other men, hearing that the conversation was interesting, joined the group to listen to the gossip.

'Lydgate and Bulstrode have always been close,' said Mr" Bambridge.

'I don't like Lydgate, and I don't trust his methods,' said Mr Hopkins. 'Our doctor, Dr Sprague, says that these modern methods are dangerous. And especially now that there's cholera in the town, we need doctors we can trust.'

'I heard that there's going to be a town meeting to discuss the cholera,' said Mr Bambridge. 'Are you going?'

'Certainly,' said Mr Hopkins. 'All the men in town will want to be there to discuss how we can prevent the cholera from spreading.'

'Do you know that Lydgate has paid all his debts?' said Mr Hawley suddenly. 'I heard it yesterday. They were going to take all his furniture, but at the last moment he found the money.'

'Yes,' said Mr Hopkins. 'I heard that. My brother works in the bank. He said that Mr Bulstrode gave Lydgate a loan.'

'That sounds bad,' said Mr Bambridge. 'Perhaps Bulstrode gave Lydgate the money to keep quiet about the death of this fellow Raffles!'

All the men listening agreed that this was probably true. And from there the gossip spread through Middlemarch like fire.

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The next day there was a town meeting to discuss the cholera. All the men of Middlemarch were there. When Bulstrode and Lydgate entered the meeting together, people stopped talking and looked at them. The meeting began, and Mr Bulstrode asked if he could speak on the subject of a new cemetery. The chairman said yes, but just then Mr Hawley rose and said, 'Before anyone speaks about the cemetery, I would like to speak about another subject, which I and many of the people of Middlemarch consider very important.'

Mr Bulstrode sat down, and Mr Hawley continued, 'Many of us in Middlemarch think that Mr Bulstrode should resign from the public positions he holds. There are certain actions which, though not illegal, are as immoral as many illegal actions. I ask Mr Bulstrode to deny, if he can, the scandalous statements made by a man now dead, who died in his house. That man - known as John Raffles - claimed that Mr Bulstrode got his money dishonestly.'

Everyone in the room looked at Mr Bulstrode, who had turned very pale. For many years, Mr Bulstrode had been a powerful person in Middlemarch. He had often criticised other people for their sinful ways. He had acted as though he himself were the perfect example of Christian virtue. Now, he was being publicly humiliated. God had not, after all, decided to spare him. God had abandoned him and left him exposed to these rough men who hated him and took pleasure in his humiliation.

Lydgate heard the accusations with alarm, but, as a doctor, he was even more alarmed by Bulstrode's pale face and trembling hands. The banker stood up to speak: 'The people who are attacking me are doing so not because they want justice but because they hate me. They have always hated me, because I criticised them for their sinful lives. They spent all their money on sin, while I spent mine on charitable works.'

Many voices were raised in disapproval of Bulstrode's speech, but one was louder than the rest: 'If you mean me, sir,' cried Mr Hawley, 'I never pretended to be a saint, as you do. Again I ask you to explain or deny the accusations made against you!'

The chairman turned to Bulstrode and said, 'I think that, because Mr Hawley and his friends have asked it, you should offer an explanation of the things of which you have been accused. If you wish, I will listen to your explanation later today in private. Now, I must ask you to leave, so that we can continue the meeting.'

After a moment's hesitation, Bulstrode took his hat from the floor and slowly rose, but he seemed about to fall. Lydgate felt sure that the banker was not strong enough to walk out on his own. What could he do? He stood up, took Bulstrode's arm, and helped him out of the room. It was an act of compassion that he did naturally, as a man and as a doctor, but he knew that those present saw him as Bulstrode's friend and ally. He knew that, by helping Bulstrode at that moment, he was separating himself from the other men in the room. Poor Lydgate could now see exactly what the other men of Middlemarch thought of him: they thought that he had taken a bribe to keep silent about the death of Raffles.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Sunset and sunrise

That evening, Dorothea had dinner with Mr Brooke, Sir James and Celia. Mr Brooke, who had been at the meeting, told everyone the whole sad story. Dorothea listened with deep interest, and asked her uncle to repeat the parts involving Lydgate. When Mr Brooke had finished, she said, 'You don't believe that Mr Lydgate has done anything wrong, do you? I don't! Let's find out the truth and prove his innocence!'

'Let's not be too hasty, my dear,' said Mr Brooke.

'We must help Mr Lydgate,' she said earnestly. 'We must tell everyone that we believe him to be innocent! I can't be indifferent to the troubles of a man who helped me in my trouble and in my illness.'

'But, Dorothea,' said Sir James, 'we don't know that he is innocent.'

'Oh, how cruel!' cried Dorothea. 'Don't you want to be the one person who believes he's innocent, when everyone else thinks he's guilty? Our neighbours almost always think that we're worse than we really are. I don't think he could possibly have accepted a bribe. I will ask Mr Lydgate to tell me the truth, so that I can help him. I will take Mr Bulstrode's place at the new hospital. When he tells me the truth, we can all help him out of this trouble.'

'It's true that a woman can sometimes show sympathy when a man must be more cautious,' said Mr Brooke.

'Surely a woman should be cautious too and listen to those who know better than she does,' replied Sir James.

Later, when the sisters were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said, 'You must listen to Sir James, Dodo, otherwise you will get into trouble. You always did and you always will get into trouble when you follow your own ideas.'

Dorothea's eyes filled with angry tears. She felt that every generous impulse she had was frustrated.

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Lydgate did not tell Rosamond what had happened at the town meeting. 'If I tell her, she will be indifferent to my suffering,' he thought. 'She will say that I've made her life miserable.' He could not bear to see that cold distant look on her face as he told her his troubles.

As soon as the debts were paid, Rosamond felt better. But she was not happy. Her married life was not what she had hoped. Lydgate was very gentle to her, but she remembered the things he had said to her when he was angry. They had offended her deeply. She felt that her marriage was a failure.

Often she thought of Ladislaw. 'If I had married him, everything would have been delightful,' she thought. She knew that he admired Mrs Casaubon very much, but she was sure that he loved her more. In her fantasies, Will had a great passion for her. 'He will return to Middlemarch to be near me,' she thought. 'He will never marry. He will live nearby and adore me always.'

A few days before the memorable town meeting, Will wrote a letter to Rosamond and Lydgate: 'I am coming back to Middlemarch for a brief visit,' he wrote. 'I hope I will still be welcome in your drawing-room. I look forward to our music.'

As Lydgate read the letter aloud to her, Rosamond smiled. 'Mr Ladislaw is coming back, and the debts are paid,' she thought. 'Now everything will be pleasant.'

A few days later, she sent out invitations to a party. She did not tell Lydgate, because she knew he would say that a party cost too much money. 'When the invitations have been accepted,' thought Rosamond, 'I'll tell him.' But all the invitations were refused. Lydgate was looking through the post one day and saw the last reply.

'Why is Chicheley writing to you?' he asked, handing her the letter. Rosamond opened it and showed it to him. 'Why did you send out invitations without telling me?' cried Lydgate, furious.

She said nothing.

'Do you hear me?'

'Certainly I hear you,' said Rosamond.

Afraid that he might become violent, Lydgate walked out of the room. Rosamond thought that he was getting more and more intolerable. She wondered why all the people she had invited had refused the invitations. In fact, she now realised that none of her friends and family had talked to her for the last few days. She put on her hat and coat and went immediately to her father's house, and he told her everything.

That evening, she sat pale and silent in the drawing-room. 'Have you heard anything that distresses you, Rosamond?' asked Lydgate.

'Yes,' she answered.

'What have you heard?'

'Everything, I suppose. Papa told me.'

There was a silence. Lydgate thought, 'If she has any trust in me, she ought to speak now and say that she believes I am innocent.'

But Rosamond said nothing. She thought that he should be the first to speak. He should say he was sorry for causing her such pain and disgrace. She had no idea whether or not he was guilty. If he was innocent, why did he not do something to prove it?

That silence made them more alienated from each other than they had ever been before.

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A few days later, Dorothea received a letter from Bulstrode, asking her to discuss the new hospital with Lydgate. She had not contacted Lydgate, because Sir James did not wish her to do so. But now that Bulstrode had asked her, she was eager to talk to Lydgate. She longed to help him. Her own life seemed empty now, and she wanted above all to help others. As she waited for him in the library at Lowick, she thought of all the times in the past when she had talked to Lydgate. She remembered his help and comfort when her husband was ill and after his death. She remembered that one strange occasion when she had found Ladislaw singing with Mrs Lydgate, and she wondered what Lydgate's marriage was like.

When he came in, she noticed the change in his face. 'I wanted to talk to you days ago, Mr Lydgate,' she said, 'but I waited until I heard from Mr

Bulstrode again about the new hospital. I'm thinking of taking Mr Bulstrode's place as main benefactor of the hospital, and I hope you'll continue to manage it.'

'I may have to leave Middlemarch, Mrs Casaubon,' said Lydgate. He felt that he could do nothing that went against Rosamond's wishes, and Rosamond wanted above all to leave Middlemarch and escape the disgrace.

'Not because there is no one to believe in you?' asked Dorothea. 'I know that people have misinterpreted your actions. The moment I heard about it, I knew that they were wrong. You've never done anything dishonourable.'

'Thank you,' said Lydgate in a trembling voice. No one had yet expressed belief in his innocence. These few words of trust from a woman were very important to him.

'Please tell me what happened,' said Dorothea. 'I'm sure the truth will prove your innocence.'

For the first time in his life, Lydgate trusted entirely in someone else's generosity and sympathy. He told her everything.

'I'm so sorry,' said Dorothea, when he had finished speaking. 'I know you wanted to do great things with your life. It's so sad when someone tries to do great work and fails. I'll explain, everything to all the people I know - Sir James Chettam and Mr Brooke and other influential people in Middlemarch. They'll listen to me. Then you can stay in Middlemarch and work at the new hospital as before. Even though only a few people will believe that you are innocent at first, gradually others will be persuaded. Then perhaps you'll be able to do the great work you wanted to do, and the town will be proud of you,' she ended with a smile.

Lydgate hesitated for a moment, then he said, 'Why shouldn't I tell you? You know what marriage is. You'll understand everything.'

Dorothea felt her heart beginning to beat faster. Did he have that sorrow too?

Lydgate continued: 'I can't do anything without considering my wife's happiness. I would like to do as you suggest, if I were alone, but it's impossible. She wants to leave Middlemarch She can't bear the disgrace.'

'But if she understood the good that might come if you stayed here -'

'She won't understand it,' replied Lydgate. 'In fact, this trouble has made it difficult for us to speak to each other I'm not sure what she thinks. She may think I have really done something evil. It's my fault. I ought to be more open.'

'May I go and see her?' said Dorothea, eagerly.

'Oh, please do,' said Lydgate. 'It'll please her to think that you still respect me. She'll feel honoured by your visit. I ought to have told her everything myself, but -'

He stopped speaking, and there was a moment's silence. Dorothea did not say what she was thinking - that she knew very well the difficulties husbands and wives sometimes have in talking to each other.

Instead she said, 'I will talk to Mrs Lydgate and explain our plans to her, then you can continue at the new hospital and do the work you always wanted to do.'

'No,' said Lydgate. 'I can't let you put money into a project that depends on me. I'm so unpopular in Middlemarch, that the project is sure to fail if I manage it. Besides, I can't do anything for a long time except try to earn an income.'

'It makes me sad to hear you talk so hopelessly,' said Dorothea. 'I have a lot of money - too much money. I could give you an income. Then you could do your great work.'

'God bless you, Mrs Casaubon!' said Lydgate, rising from the great leather chair in which he had been sitting. 'You're very generous, but I can't profit from your generosity. I must leave Middlemarch and look for the kind of work that will earn money. I must do as other men do. I'll look for work in London. I'll treat the diseases of rich people and get well paid for it. That's the life I must live.'

'It is not brave to give up the fight,' said Dorothea.

'No, it is not brave,' he replied. 'But you have given me courage by believing in me.'

As he rode away from Lowick, Lydgate thought, 'This young creature has a heart big enough for the Virgin Mary. She feels friendship for men - I never saw that in a woman before - and a man can be friends with her. I wonder if she could ever feel passion for a man? Real passion - not the feelings she had about Casaubon. Ladislaw? Well, her love might help a man more than her money.'

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That day and the next, Dorothea spent a lot of time thinking about her visit to Rosamond. For her, the image of Mrs Lydgate had always been associated with Will Ladislaw. She had always believed that Will was innocent of any wrongdoing. At first, when he had said he was going away, she had thought perhaps he was leaving to escape the temptation of Rosamond. Dorothea, trying to find excuses for him, had often thought of how lovely Mrs Lydgate was and how she shared his interest in music. Perhaps she shared his other tastes as well. But his final words to her, when she had last seen him at Tipton Grange, had convinced her that she herself was the one he loved. She had been delighted by his delicate sense of honour, his determination that no one could criticise him justly. She now felt sure that his relations with Mrs Lydgate were innocent.

The news about Bulstrode had damaged Will's social position. The gossip in Middlemarch was that 'young Ladislaw is the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker!' This had made Dorothea wish to defend him, but she felt that the deeper relation between them must be kept secret, and so she had remained silent.

With these thoughts in mind, Dorothea went to Lydgate's house one clear spring morning. She had a letter for Lydgate, in which she offered to lend him money so that he could pay his debt to Bulstrode. The letter contained a cheque for one thousand pounds.

The Lydgates' maid was washing the steps outside the front door. 'Is Mrs Lydgate in?' asked Dorothea.

'I'm not sure, my lady' said the maid. 'Please come in and wait in the drawing-room. I'll go to look for her.'

Dorothea followed the maid to the drawing-room. The maid pushed open the door without saying anything or looking inside. Dorothea entered then stopped suddenly, horrified by what she saw. Sitting on the sofa, speaking softly, was Will Ladislaw.

Rosamond sat close beside him. Her face was turned up to his. She was blushing, and her eyes were full of tears. Will was holding both her hands in his.

When they noticed her, Rosamond and Will stood up quickly.

'Excuse me, Mrs Lydgate, the servant didn't know that you were here,' said Dorothea. 'I just came to leave a letter for Mr Lydgate.' Dorothea put the letter on a small table and quickly left the house. She got into her carriage and told the driver to go to Freshitt Hall.

She was paler than usual, but she felt full of energy. Her anger and contempt made her energetic. What she had seen was so despicable - so far below her idea of Will Ladislaw - that she felt repelled and disgusted. These feelings made her heart beat fast and gave her unusual energy. She spent the day as she had planned to spend it - going to Freshitt and Tipton Grange to raise support for Lydgate.

Rosamond and Will stood motionless for a long time. He stared at the place where Dorothea had stood. She looked anxiously at him. She knew that Will was deeply distressed by what had happened, yet she was sure that she could comfort him. She touched his arm.

'Don't touch me!' cried Will, angrily.

Rosamond sat down, offended. 'You can easily follow Mrs Casaubon and explain your preference to her,' she said.

'How can a man explain at the expense of a woman? She will never listen to a word I say again. I had no hope before, but I was sure that she believed that I was good. Whatever people said about me, she believed in me. But now she will hate me. Explain my preference? I never had a preference for her, any more than I have a preference for breathing. No other woman exists by her side.'

When Will finished speaking, her lips were pale. She was an image of misery. It was now clear to her for the first time that Will did not love her.

Her little world was in ruins. If Tertius had seen her face then, he would have tried to comfort her. Will felt no such pity. He knew that he was being cruel, but he did not care. He felt that Rosamond had ruined the ideal treasure of his life. He picked up his hat to leave, but he could not go without saying something to soften his angry last words. He thought, 'I might become trapped by this helpless sad woman who has offered herself to me.'

Finally he said, 'Shall I come and see Lydgate this evening?'

'If you like,' Rosamond replied in a trembling voice.

Then he left the house.

When Will was gone, Rosamond went upstairs and lay on the bed. She told the maid that she felt ill. When Lydgate came home, he sat beside her and held her hand. She looked at him with more interest than usual, as if she were comforted by his presence.

'My poor Rosamond,' he said. 'Has something agitated you?'

She put her head on his shoulder and began to cry. For the next hour he did nothing but comfort her. He thought that Dorothea had come to visit her and that Rosamond's agitation was a result of their conversation.

That evening, Will came to see Lydgate. Lydgate told him that Rosamond was ill, then he told him of all the troubles they had had in Middlemarch since Will had left. As Lydgate spoke, Will imagined a terrible dull future in which he became Rosamond's lover and so betrayed his friend Lydgate. He had been cruel to Rosamond, and now felt an obligation to comfort her. His life had been ruined, and he cared very little about what happened to him now.

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Alone in her room at Lowick that night, Dorothea cried out, 'Oh, I did love him!' She sat up all night, weeping and sobbing in anguish. Her fine woman's body was shaken by sobs. She cried for the loss of Will - the bright creature she had trusted through all her troubles. She lay down on the cold floor and cried herself to sleep.

In the cold hours of early morning, she woke up, exhausted and sorrowful but calm. She wrapped warm things around her and sat in a big

chair by the window. She thought about yesterday morning, examining every detail and its possible meaning. 'I was not alone in that scene,' she thought. 'It was not my experience only.' She had gone to Lydgate's house, hoping to help Rosamond. In her anger and disgust, she had abandoned that idea. But Dorothea was not the kind of woman to hate her rival more than her faithless lover. She had a strong sense of justice. All her sympathy for Lydgate and his wife returned to her now. Their marriage - like her own - had its secret troubles. 'My own misery should make me more eager to help others,' she thought, 'instead of making me passive and indifferent. This is a crisis in our lives - not only in my life but also in the lives of those three others. What can I do to save them?'

It had taken her a long time to come to that question. She looked out of the window and saw that the sun was rising. She saw a man walking down the road with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby. In the field she saw a shepherd and his dog. She thought, 'The world is big and full of people who live and work and suffer. I am a part of that life.'

She called Tantripp. 'Please bring me some coffee, Tantripp,' she said. 'And my new dress.' By eight o'clock, she was walking to Middlemarch to see Rosamond.

Lydgate met her at the door and handed her a letter. 'I wanted to put my thanks in writing,' he said.

'You have accepted?' she asked, anxiously.

'Yes. I will send the cheque to Bulstrode today.'

Lydgate went to work, and Dorothea followed the maid to the drawing-room. Rosamond stood in the middle of the room, looking pale and nervous. She wondered why Mrs Casaubon had come to see her. She was sure that Mrs Casaubon could feel nothing but animosity for her. Rosamond prepared to meet that animosity with cold polite passivity. But, when she entered the room, Dorothea put out her hand to shake Rosamond's. Her face, though sad, had a sweet open expression. Rosamond realised that Mrs Casaubon's state of mind must be completely different from what she had imagined.

'I wanted to talk to you yesterday about the injustice Mr Lydgate has suffered,' said Dorothea. 'I hope it will make you feel better to know that he

has friends who believe in him.'

'I know you have been very good,' said Rosamond, realising, with surprise and relief, that Dorothea was not going to mention Will.

'Two days ago, when he came to Lowick to discuss the new hospital, Mr Lydgate told me everything that happened in connection with Mr Bulstrode and Mr Raffles. He told me because I asked him. I believed that he had never acted dishonourably, and I asked him to tell me everything. He confessed that he had never explained it to anyone, not even to you.' Dorothea told Rosamond the whole story as Lydgate had told it to her.

When she had finished, Rosamond blushed and said, 'Thank you. You are very kind.'

'He feels sorry that he never explained all this to you, but I hope you'll forgive him. It hurts him more than anything that his misfortunes must hurt you. He could speak to me because I wasn't involved, and because he knows that I had troubles in my own marriage. So then I asked him if I could come and see you. That's why I came yesterday and am here today. Trouble is so difficult to bear. We must help each other.' Her face became animated as she spoke, and she laid her hand on Rosamond's. Rosamond, overcome with emotion, burst into tears.

Dorothea had needed a great deal of self-control to speak to Rosamond. Her own sorrow was still unbearably painful. Now she realised that she had, at that moment, a very strong influence over the fragile creature crying by her side. 'This might be a turning-point in three lives,' thought Dorothea, trying to control herself and keep back her own tears. 'My life is ruined. Nothing can be done about that. But their lives can be rescued from the misery of mistaken relationships.'

Rosamond's distress was even deeper than Dorothea imagined. She had assumed that Dorothea felt nothing but jealousy and hatred for her. Now it was clear that Dorothea had feelings that she - Rosamond - had never imagined. She felt as if she were walking in an unknown world.

She looked at Dorothea openly and without embarrassment, with eyes like blue flowers. What was the use of thinking about behaviour and dignity

after this crying? Dorothea looked almost as childish, with tears in her eyes. Pride was broken down between these two.

'Marriage is such a terribly close relationship,' began Dorothea, timidly. 'Even if we love someone else more than our husband, it's no use. We need all our power of loving for the marriage. If we love someone else, that murders the marriage - and the marriage stays with us like a murder - and everything else is gone.' She fell silent, afraid that she had said too much. She was also afraid of sounding as if she herself were perfect. 'I know, I know - the other love may be very strong - it may seem like death to part with it - and we are weak - I am weak -' She stopped in speechless agitation. Her face was very pale and her lips trembled. She held both Rosamond's hands tightly in her own.

Rosamond suddenly kissed Dorothea on the forehead. For a minute the two women put their arms around each other like two people in a shipwreck. 'You are thinking something that is not true,' said Rosamond. 'When you came in yesterday, it was not as you thought. He was telling me that he loved you and he could never love me. And now I think he hates me because you saw him with me yesterday. He told me yesterday that no other woman exists for him besides you. Now I have told you, so he shouldn't be angry with me any more.'

Dorothea felt an emotion too strong to be called joy. They sat together in silence for a while.

That evening, Lydgate said to Rosamond, 'What do you think of Mrs Casaubon now, Rosy?'

'I think she is better than anyone,' said Rosamond, 'and she is very beautiful. If you talk to her often, you will be more discontented with me than ever!'

Lydgate laughed and touched her hair. 'But has she made you any less discontented with me?'

'I think she has,' said Rosamond, looking at him. 'How tired you look, Tertius.' He felt thankful for this little sign of interest. Now Rosamond had come back to him, and he was there to offer her protection. He had chosen

this fragile creature and had taken the burden of her life in his arms. He must carry it carefully for the rest of his life.

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A few days later, Dorothea was sitting in the library at Lowick, looking out of the window at the stormy sky, when Tantripp came in.

'Mr Ladislaw is here, Madam.'

'Show him in, Tantripp,' said Dorothea, her heart beating fast.

Will entered the library and said, 'I am so grateful to you for seeing me.'

'I wanted to see you,' said Dorothea.

'I fear you think me foolish and perhaps wrong for coming back so soon,' said Will. 'You know - everyone knows now - a painful story about my family. I knew it before I went away. I wanted to tell you about it. Mr Bulstrode offered me an income, but I refused it. I didn't want an income from him. I was sure you -' He stopped in confusion, even though there was nothing to stop him saying such things now: she knew that he loved her.

'You acted as I expected you to act - very honourably,' she said.

'I'm sure that this new information about my family has not changed your feeling for me.'

'No, no. My feeling for you won't change unless I feel that you have changed.'

'I'll never change. I'll always be true to you.'

'I know that now,' said Dorothea, putting out her hand. He took her hand and raised it to his lips with a sob.

Dorothea walked over to the window and looked out, 'See how dark the clouds are,' she said.

Will laid his hat and gloves on the leather chair and followed her to the window. They stood together, looking out as the wind moved the trees and the rain began to fall. 'There is no hope for me,' said Will. 'I shouldn't have come today. I intended to go away into silence without a word from you.'

'Don't be sorry,' said Dorothea. Her lips trembled, and so did his. It was never known which lips were the first to move towards the other lips; but they kissed, and then they moved apart.

Will turned away from her and said, in an angry voice, 'It is impossible!'

Dorothea looked at him sadly.

'It is terrible to have our life ruined by circumstances,' cried Will.

'Your life need not be ruined,' said Dorothea.

'Yes, it must! It's cruel of you to speak in that way - as if there were any comfort. We'll never be married.'

'Some time - we might,' said Dorothea, in a trembling voice.

'When?' cried Will. 'I'll always be poor. I couldn't offer myself to any woman, even if she had no wealth to renounce.'

There was a silence. Dorothea wanted to say something, but it was too difficult.

Will looked angrily out of the window, then he picked up his hat and gloves and said, 'I must go now. Goodbye.'

'Oh, I cannot bear it - my heart will break,' said Dorothea. Her young passion overcame all the difficulties that had kept her silent. Tears filled her eyes and she said, 'I don't mind about poverty - I hate my wealth.'

In an instant, Will was close to her with his arms around her. 'We could live on my own fortune', she said. 'It is too much - seven hundred a year - I want so little - no new clothes - and I will learn what everything costs.'

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The Lords had just thrown out the Reform Act. The vicar, Mr Cadwallader, walked up and down the lawn at Freshitt Hall, reading The Times. Sir James was there, and Celia with the baby, and Mrs Cadwallader and Lady Chettam. Just then Mr Brooke arrived, looking sad and perplexed. 'I suppose you are unhappy about the Reform Act,' said Mr Cadwallader.

'What? Oh yes, the Reforms. That too. But I have some sad news for you.'

'What is it?' asked Lady Chettam.

'Dorothea is going to be married again,' said Mr Brooke.

'Not to young Ladislaw!' cried Mrs Cadwallader.

'Yes,' replied Mr Brooke. 'I tried to convince her not to do it, but it's no use opposing her. She can act as she likes, you know.'

'This is absolutely scandalous!' cried Sir James. 'If Ladislaw had any sense of honour, he would have left Middlemarch after Casaubon's death and never come back. I'm shocked at Dorothea's behaviour. After the mention of Ladislaw in her husband's will, she should never have seen him again. She degrades herself by marrying him: she goes from her proper social position into poverty. And what kind of man could accept such a sacrifice?'

'I told her all that,' said Mr Brooke. 'I said, "My dear, you don't know what it is to live on seven hundred a year and have no carriage." But the fact is that she dislikes Casaubon's property. She doesn't want it.'

'Be just, Chettam,' said Mr Cadwallader. 'Mrs Casaubon may be acting imprudently, but she is doing nothing wrong.'

'I disagree with you,' replied Sir James. 'I think Dorothea is doing something wrong in marrying Ladislaw.'

'Dodo said she would never marry again,' said Celia, wishing to support her husband.

'I heard her say that too,' said Lady Chettam.

'There is usually a silent exception in such cases,' said Mrs Cadwallader. 'But why are you all so surprised? You did nothing to prevent it. And Mr Casaubon almost arranged this marriage by his unpleasant behaviour in his will.'

'I'm on Ladislaw's side,' said the vicar. 'When I married Elinor, I only had a thousand pounds a year. Everybody disapproved of me!'

'But you were a Cadwallader,' said his wife with dignity. 'It's difficult to say what Mr Ladislaw is. The son of a Polish piano teacher, was it? The grandson of a pawnbroker?'

'Come on, Elinor,' said Mr Cadwallader. 'It's time for us to go.'

Finale

Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending. Marriage, which has been the end of so many narratives, is still a great beginning. It is the beginning of the home epic. Some start out with hope and enthusiasm but get discouraged on the way. All who read about young people's lives are interested in how those lives continued.

Lydgate's hair never became white. He died when he was only fifty. He had made a lot of money attending rich patients in London and on the Continent. When he died, his wife and four daughters were left with a comfortable income. He had written an article on gout, and others regarded him as a successful man. But he always regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he once intended to do. His friends thought he was very fortunate to have such a charming wife, and Rosamond never did anything to change their opinion. Her character never changed. She continued to do as she liked. As the years went on, he opposed her less and less. Rosamond thought that he had learned the value of her opinion.

Dorothea always felt that there was something better she could have done with her life. Still, she never regretted that she had given up social position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw. They loved each other very much. They moved to London, and Will became a politician with strong opinions, working well in those hopeful times of reform. He finally became a Member of Parliament. Dorothea was glad that her husband was working hard to help bring justice to the world. Many who knew her thought it was a pity that such a rare and impressive woman was nothing but a wife and mother. But no one knew exactly what else she could have done.

Sir James Chettam always thought that Dorothea's second marriage was a mistake. And the people of Middlemarch continued to talk about her. They said that she was a fine girl who had married a scholar old enough to be her father, and, a year after his death, had given up her fortune to marry his cousin - a young man with no money. Those who had never met Dorothea usually said that, if she had been 'a nice woman', she would never have married either of these husbands.

Certainly her life was not ideal. A new Saint Theresa will not have the opportunity to reform convent life. Those heroic days are gone. Still, Dorothea did some modest good in the world. Those who knew her benefited from her goodness, as we all benefit from good people whose lives are not recorded or remembered.

- THE END -

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